■ Lifestyle
Carolina Herrera goes dramatic in colors of semi-precious stones

■ Metro / A23
Edsa pink fences to stay, says MMDA

■ World / A12
Robert Blake found not guilty of wife's murder

■ News / A2
RP needs its own Alcatraz, says lawmaker

■ Entertainment
Willie Revillame, beauty queen wife plan church wedding

Colonel would have gotten away with it if not for his wife

By Dona Z. Pazolagan

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Friday, March 18, 2005 ● 40 pages / vol. 19 / no. 199

THE MIRACLE of solar power now illuminates the steel sculptures from dusk to dawn at the Corregidor memorial complex, which honors the heroism of Filipino and American soldiers of WW II.

Solar power lights up Eternal Flame of freedom

By Vet Contreras

QUITE a fitting homage to an island fortress that stood its ground against the Empire of the Rising Sun.

The miracle of solar power now illuminates Corregidor's Eternal Flame Monument, which was recently installed in line with the country's yearlong commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the end of World War II.

COLUMN A1

DOJ bares Abus' Holy Week plot

'Sleepers' to target churches

By Armand N. Nocum and Christine O. Avendaño

ABU SAYAF "sleepers" are planning to bomb churches in urban centers in the country during Holy Week next week, a Department of Justice (DOJ) prosecutor said yesterday.

"We received word that they have plans of their 'graduates' trained in bombings and demolition. They have been shifted from kidnappings to bombings," State Prosecutor Peter Medalla said yesterday. "The armed struggle is no longer in the mountains but in urban centers."

He said he got the information on Monday at the height of the standoff between Abu Sayyaf detainees and police authorities in the Camp Bagong Diwa jail in Taguig.

Medalla was one of those who got word of the Abu Sayyaf plans to hold the detention center at Camp Bagong Diwa two weeks before it happened.

The Abu Sayyaf threatened in recent retaliatory bombings in Manila and other cities after police crushed a prison uprising allegedly led by its detained leaders on Tuesday.

The Abu Sayyaf may even launch coordinated terror attacks outside the country, the military said, citing the intercept, two of a coded Abu Sayyaf member.

The 18 Qaeda-linked militants also received at least $1 6,500 over the past year from suspected members of the regional terror group Jemaah Islamiyah for explosives training, according to a report on the interrogation of Gamal Baharum obtained by The Associated Press.

FULL STORY, A10

WOUNDED SOLDIERS HONORED. President Arroyo visits the soldiers injured during the two-week battle with the Pilipinet Breakaway Group and Abu Sayyaf elements in Jolo, Sulu, late last month, and awards each of them a medal at the Camp Navarro General Hospital in Zamboanga City

US urges RP to sign free trade agreement

US ASSISTANT Trade Representative Barbara Weisel yesterday urged the Philippines to sign a bilateral free trade agreement (FTA) with the United States to boost its economy and keep it globally competitive.

Weisel said a newly completed study by the Asia-based East West Center think tank found that for the Philippines, "there would be a benefit of a 3.1 percent increase in nominal GDP (gross domestic product)" on concluding such a pact with its largest trading partner.

She said the Philippine government was also coordinating a parallel study.

The Philippine economy expanded at an eight-year high of 6.1 percent in 2004, but a lagbehind many of its neighbors in both growth and foreign direct investment.

Weisel said an FTA with the United States, the world's biggest

FULL STORY, B6

Las Vegas odds favoring Pinoy sensation zoom up

By Bacuk Trinidad

LAS VEGAS – A strange thing happened to the sports betting lines here yesterday after odds in favor of Manny Pacquiao got even bigger.

There was general opposition that the numbers would start to favor all following the arrival of Erik Morales in the fight city on Tuesday (Wednesday in Manila), as Mexican sentiment would eventually prevail.

Odds are based on the sums wagered on a particular fighter so

from

Pacquiao, who has been favored over Morales since the fight announcement in January was a minus-130 favorite before the arrival of Morales.

That meant a $130 bet on Pacquiao would pay only $100.

Pacquiao, now, however, a big-per minus-105 favorite yesterday, as announced in the fight press conference at MGM Grand.

Morales, on the other hand,

LAS VEGAS, A10

AFP: How can kidnappers be martyrs?

By Dona Z. Pazolagan and Norman Bordadora

AT FIR as the military is concerned, the souls of the 22 Abu Sayyaf suspects killed Tuesday during a police assault on the Camp Bagong Diwa jail did not

go to heaven but to hell.

"They are not true Muslims. They are not true believers. That's why Allah sent them to hell," Lt. Col. Buenaventura Pascual, military spokesperson, said yesterday.

The 22, including three women Abu Sayyaf leaders, were buried in "shallow" or mass graves the other day at the Imam Muh Hassen Memorial Park in Taguig, the only Muslim cemetery in Metro Manila.

The families of the slain Abu Sayyaf members, the Muslim community in Taguig and three leaders declared their martyrs because they died without their culpability of disbanding themselves and the court had not yet ruled on their guilt.

"How can you consider martyrs those who killed innocent

MORE STORY, A10

Storm batters Samar, Leyte; 5 dead, 3 missing

By Jhanne Napallacan and Joby Gabieta
PDI Visayas Bureau

CEBU CITY – At least five persons were killed and three others were reported missing in the wake of Tropical Storm "Auring."

Of the five, three drowned when a passenger motorboat capsized off the coast of Ormoc City before dawn yesterday. The two others, an elderly woman and a 5-year-old girl, were reportedly hit by falling trees and killed in Cebu.

Auring winds toppled electricity poles, cutting off power in most parts of the Eastern Visayas and in two towns in Cebu, the Office of the Civil Defense (OCD) in Eastern and Central Visayas (Region 8 and 7) reported.

Thousands of people were stranded in various Visayan ports, with interisland vessels ordered by authorities to stay put.

Adriano Pompe, chief of the OCD in Eastern Visayas, said a passenger liner and a fishing boat were both anchored 1.5 nautical miles from the Ormoc port Wednesday night, supposedly to seek shelter from the storm. But both vessels capsized at around 3 a.m. because of strong winds and rough seas.

Senator Castillo, one of 58 fishermen on board the fishing boat Senior Santiago, was reported missing, according to Lt. Commander Claudio Ramon, chief of the Ormoc Coast Guard. The others have been rescued.

Those who drowned, all passengers of the RORO Supercats 8, were identified as Sherin Dahalan, 33, Lito Cimarron, 47,

DETAILS, A11

ROCKS AT THE INQUIRER
The Inquirer turns board chair Ma'ti M. Prieto, hosts a dinner for Susan Roces on Wednesday at its main office in Makati City on the occasion of her late husband, Fernando Poe Jr., as the Filipino of the Year 2004.

Sour spaghetti downs 85 kids in Tarlac town

By PDI Central Luzon Desk and PDI Visayas Bureau

WITH the death of 27 schoolchildren in Bohol after eating pesticide-laced cassava still fresh in the nation's memory, two more cases of mass food poisoning—also victimizing pupils—were reported in Tarlac and southern Leyte on Wednesday.

In Concepcion town in Tarlac, a graduation celebration for daycare pupils sent at least 85 children and some adults to the hospital where they fell ill after eating spaghetti served during the school official's lunch.

Regional health director Asuncion Ordoña said the children vomited and suf-

MORE STORY, A10

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

FRIDAY, MARCH 18, 2005

WEATHER FORECAST

Second FRONTPAGE

'RP needs its own Alcatraz'

By Philip C. Tubeza

IT'S TIME we built our own Alcatraz, a legislator has suggested amid the finger-pointing and breast-beating in the aftermath of the Abu Sayyaf uprising in a Tagudy jail early this week that left 26 dead.

Rep. Abraham Mitra said the government would turn one of the country's 7,100 islands into the "Philippine version of Alcatraz" where hardened criminals and terrorists could be jailed.

The infamous correctional was referring to the virtually inescapable island prison off San Francisco where notorious American criminals once kept.

Today, it has empty cells as one of the most popular tourist destinations in San Francisco.

"We need a specifically made-for-terrorists jail house...Perhaps what we need is an Alcatraz," he said.

"It will be a security nightmare to allow terrorists who rape, kidnap, and kill to mingle with ordinary criminals in a jail setting. One bodin more of a town center with its stores (have a place of incarceration," Mitra said.

He noted that the New Bilibid Prisons in Muntinlupa was "overcrowded with its dungeon and karaoke stalls (but) inmates have no freedom."

Prisoners like the Abu Sayyaf suspects should be held in an isolated place so that "they would really pay for their crimes...preferably an island. The sea can serve as a moat around the prison. A place impossible to escape from and no isolated that no inmate will dare pull a pathetic stunt because its TV (live coverage." Mitra said.

But he ruled out the leading Bilibid Colony in his province as it also for his proposed island prison.

"It's a prison without walls so it's not ideal for terrorists," he said.

Mitra also ruled out the Sumilao because the supposed beneficiaries (indigenous Mamanwa) there were "attacked from within and far from civilization."

"We also have to consider the welfare of the jail guards," he said.

He suggested that the island prison could be maintained, paving the space to use as "a lighthouse, an environmental station, a seaside and remote detachment, and a training camp for sea-based forces."

"To save on costs, the buildings need not be large for after all these are for a few special prisoners only," Mitra added.

Wakeup call

The Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines, meanwhile, said the bloody Tagudy jail crisis should serve as a wakeup call for government to improve the country's penal system.

"Lives are wasted again because of the failure of government to address institutional issues affecting the criminal justice system," said Bishop Pedro Arigo, chair of the Episcopal Commission on Prison Pastoral Care.

"We appeal that measures in the justice system, the congested, outdated, outmoded and dilapidated jail and prison facilities, inadequate personnel, and corruption be properly addressed," Arigo said in a statement.

The CBCP said the prisoners who tried to bolt the high security jail better had "legitimate demands but used the wrong method of bringing them to the attention of the people concerned."

They complained of deplorable conditions at Camp Bagong Diwa in Taguig on top of insisting that not all of them were Abu Sayyaf bandits, the CBCP said in a statement.

Among the fatalities was a 75-year-old inmate who was suffering from Alzheimer's disease. He was among some 100 suspects returned to Muntinlupa more than two months ago.

Heartbreaking

The CBCP also described as "heartbreaking" the "death of the correctional employees who were carrying out their duties despite the lack of resources, not to mention their meager salary, and lack of benefits."

The director of the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology, Arnaiz Alli, in sealed investigation for the alleged security lapses at the jail facility but the coroner's were sometimes in order.

Alli has refused to step down, despite calls by some senators for his resignation.

Sen. Ralph Recto said jail congestion cannot be solved just by building more jails.

Speedy resolution

"The most effective form of jail decongestion is still the speedy resolution of the cases of the detained," Recto said in a statement.

He said the courts are also suffering from congestion, citing Supreme Court records showing that the lower court's new clogged with 774,936 pending cases by the end of 2003.

This was a slight improvement from the 784,709 cases pending in 2002, he said.

"Due to political delays, many detainees have actually stayed in jail longer than...the maximum prison time for the crimes they have been charged with," Recto said.

Too crammed

The senator said the country's jails are so crammed that one inmate occupies an average 1.4 square meters of jail space.

Also, Recto said about seven prisoners per 1% sqm of jail space is one of the world's highest," Recto said in a statement.

He said the overcrowding leads to poor sanitation and hygiene, making the prisoners vulnerable to disease.

"The jails have become hotbeds for epidemics," Recto said.

Unfortunately for the prisoners, Recto said no relief was in sight because the 2006 national budget does not provide funds for the construction of new cells.

With a report from Christian U. Esguerra and Juliet Labog-Javellana

VAT passage delay costing RP—Purisima

By Juliet Labog-Javellana

IS WHAT could be the government's last-ditch effort to convince the Senate to pass the value-added tax measure, Finance Secretary Cesar Purisima yesterday told senators that the delay in the passage was costing the country some P5 billion in lost opportunity every month.

Senate President Franklin Drilon said Purisima told senators in a briefing that based on the projected P68.8billion additional revenues from VAT, P5 billion or P166 million a day was lost due to the delay in approving of the tax measure.

"That is why there is a need for us to work on this measure as fast as we can," Drilon said.

The Senate ends its session today for a three-week Lenten break. The House of Representatives last night adjourned, effectively shelving the final approval of the VAT measure until April 11.

After a five-hour caucus of senators yesterday, the fourth in four days where three Cabinet officials were called to explain, Sen. Ralph Recto ruled out the passage of the bill in the Senate this week or next.

"I don't believe we will finish it by (today)," Recto said. The Senate version, he added, might not be passed until after sessions resume next month.

"There's a lot of days that at least two senators are asking for (from) the (last) (Department of Finance) and (the) (Department of Energy) for them to be able to make up their minds on policy considerations," Recto said.

Senate Majority Leader Francis Pangilinan said Malacañang had the option of calling a special session next week, but so far there was no request.

After the session, the Senate suspended its session and will resume this afternoon, their last day unless there is a last-minute request from Malacañang for a special session.

Presidential political adviser Gabriel Claudio said the Senate was still weighing whether it should call for a special session. "It depends on whether the Senate would be able to pass its VAT bill.

Purisima, Energy Secretary Vince Perez and Internal Revenue Commissioner Guillermo Parayno were summoned to the Senate to address questions by Senators Drilon Lacson, Sergio Osmeña III, Jinggoy Estrada and Jamby Madrigal.

The senators were concerned with the inclusion of power companies, petroleum, airline and shipping companies in the coverage of VAT, the exclusion of excise taxes on petroleum and removal of the franchise tax on power companies and the increase in corporate income tax.

Osmeña reportedly walked out of the session over Drilon's insistence to pass the VAT measure before lawmakers adjourn today for the Holy Week break.

"You just can't pass a trillion-law [proclamation] bill like people, and do a sloppy job," said Osmeña. "You can't just pass a sloppy VAT."

Osmeña still wanted more information from the power sector, while Madrigal asked for documents from the Bureau of Internal Revenue.

Meanwhile, Filipinos will have to shell out P2.68 per liter more on their fuel purchases and add 62.54 centavos per kilowatt hour on their electricity bills under the Malacañang-backed proposal for a 12 percent VAT on previously exempted oil companies and power producers. *With reports from JJ Burgonio, Gil Cabunoyan Jr. and Mike G. Cruz*

NBI: Pesticide killed Bohol kids

THE NATIONAL Bureau of Investigation yesterday said that cyanosphos, an organophosphate pesticide and insecticide, was the poison that caused the deaths of 27 schoolchildren in Mabini, Bohol, last week.

The NBI's findings virtually confirmed the conclusions of the Department of Health which had ruled out cyanide as the cause of the massive food poisoning.

"It was not cyanide [that] contaminated. It was found on the specimen's collected from the homes of resident Ana Rhona Larroza in Barangay Poroc, particularly in the frying pan she used in preparing the camote," NBI Director Reynaldo Wycoco said.

Wycoco said Lapreig may have **contaminated the camote** for those or much during the preparation of the camote sweets that she sold to the schoolchildren.

The chemical is odorless and looks like flour, he said.

Wycoco said the highly toxic chemical was found in the internal **organs, blood and stomach contents** of two of the victims, Wilfredo Layog Jr. and Dennis Ayan, both 7.

Authorities earlier suspected cyanide poisoning from the camote sweets. Cyanide is found in the root of the camote tuber, a staple for most Filipinos, but is rendered virtually harmless when cooked properly.

According to Dr. Mabel Bapayan, chief of the NBI forensic chemistry division, cyanosphos is a deadly chemical which is an ingredient found in household and agricultural pesticides.

It is used to kill or control cockroaches, land leaps, lice in poultry and birds, and fleas and ticks in dogs and other domestic animals.

It is also marketed as a powder to remove toilet odor.

"It has a very potent toxicity. It can produce adverse effects on human physiology[-]like central and definitely is much more deadly when ingested even in small amounts. The victims here were **children, so they were more vulnerable**," Pagaduan said.

Wycoco has ordered lawyer Rene Bondoc, the case's lead investigator, to return to Bohol to find out what specific brands of pesticides and insecticides containing cyanophos were being marketed there. Tina Santos

THE WINNING FEU team, from left, Dianna Karenina Chebat, Michael Marra, Prof. Gerald Villar and Dean Ozzy Cabalay

FEU studies win Harvard tilt

THE EASTERN University marketing students Michael Marra and Dianna Karenina Chebat won runner-up in the 2005 Harvard World Cases sponsored by the Harvard Business School in Boston, Massachusetts, on March 2.

Marra and Chebat were the "Most Likely to Have a Global Impact" award and the "People's Choice" award in their board-style business plan which proposed the use of construction panel boards made from recycled metal scraps in order to address the needs of **low-cost housing while ensuring** big the practice of recycling.

The two were coached by Dean Ozzy Cabalay and Prof. Gerald Villar.

Other awardees were Bryan University (Rhode Island), Harvard Business School, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (Wharton) and Yale University.

The FEU community led by chair Dr. Jesus S. Sison[-]Lee and president Lydia M. Lydia Echaza and the FEU Alumni Foundation and Nieanor Reyes Memorial Foundation, hosted a celebratory reception for the team.

Small oil players hike pump prices

BARELY a week after adjusting their prices, new oil players Eastern Petroleum Corp., Flying V Retail Petroleum Corp. and United **Petroleum Philippines Inc.** today hiked the prices of their gasoline, diesel and kerosene by 50 centavos a liter.

Unioil was the first to hike its prices, implementing the adjustment at 6 a.m. Eastern and Flying V followed suit at 12 p.m., while Petrol increased its prices at 6 p.m.

They all cited the surge in regional and **international oil prices** as the reason for the price increase.

As of March 16, the benchmark Dubai **crude had reached an average price of $53.68** a barrel, up by almost $5 from last month's average of $48.97 a barrel.

The price of unleaded gasoline based on the Mean of Platts Singapore (MOPS) benchmark for refined petroleum products also climbed to an average of $59.07 a barrel in the first 16 days of March, from only $54.27 a barrel last month.

The price of MOPS-based diesel likewise soared to an all-time high March 7-16 average of $66.67 a barrel, almost $11 higher than the February average of $55.80 a barrel.

The escalating prices of oil in the world market was mainly attributed to cozy demand for heating fuel in Europe and the northeastern part of the United States, which are both experiencing a prolonged winter and extremely cold weather.

Another factor for the spike in prices was the supply uncertainty brought about by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries' March 16 meeting in Iran.

With the meeting now over and with Opec deciding to boost its output by 500,000 barrels a day beginning next month, prices were, based on trends, **expected to go down.**

However, despite Opec's announcement of a hike in production, world prices continued to soar, seemingly driven more by the huge demand than by any other market factor. Abigail L. Ho

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Storm batters Samar, Leyte; 5 dead, 3 missing

[illegible] and Angelita Calendario, 42, all were residents of Pinut-an town on Guimaras Island in Iloilo, to which the vessel was headed before it dropped anchor near the port.

Two other passengers—Rey Erlen Abut, 42, and Helen Sarabia, 45—also residents of Pinut-an—were reported missing.

The M/B Esperanza, owned by a certain Ephraim Olero, was carrying seven crew members and 20 passengers.

Pango said the Coast Guard secured the sea off Genao but the missing persons had yet to be found until past noon yesterday.

The survivors were given medical attention by city health personnel. The fatalities were taken to the city health office, to be claimed by their next of kin.

On land, 3-year-old Ravenna Alfante of Cleet, Mobolfin, died after a gasoline tree fell on the family's residence around 5 a.m. yesterday.

Demetria Dimagmaliw, 72, of Bantayan Island, also died after being struck by an uprooted coconut tree.

Canceled flights

Storm signal No. 3 was earlier hoisted over Leyte, Panay and Guimaras, and parts of Mindoro and Cebu.

Pagasa forecasters yesterday said during, with winds of 95 kph and gusts of up to 120 kph, was moving slowly away from the Philippines and in the direction of southern Vietnam.

They said signal No. 2 was still in effect over areas near Boni Palawan, the Calamian Islands, Cuyo Island, and Antique, and signal No. 1 over Mindoro, Romblon, western Palawan, western Panay and Negros Occidental.

Aseng drove a number seven into the holiday plans of hundreds of would-be travelers to or from the city that's the center of the storm.

A total of 53 flights to Manila and various destinations in the Visayas and Mindanao were canceled yesterday because of the bad weather, according to an update from the Manila International Airport Authority (MIAA).

Particularly affected were the Manila-Catarman, Manila-Tuguegarao, Catarman-Manila, Manila-Tuguegarao, Catarman-Manila, Manila-Tuguegarao, Catarman-Manila

GMA, Cabinet set Holy Week retreat

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo and her Cabinet will hold a six-day Lenten retreat on March 22, Holy Tuesday, in Malacañang.

A Palace source said yesterday the spiritual retreat will be held at Subay Bungang in the Palace compound from 2 to 7 p.m.

Originally, the plan was to hold the retreat on March 23 in Baguio City, according to the source.

But in a radio interview, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye confirmed the holding of the retreat on Holy Tuesday but declined to say where it would be held.

Bunye said the retreat was for the President and Cabinet members who wanted to attend it.

"This retreat is voluntary," he said in an interview over dzRB, noting that the practice had been observed by the Palace for two years now. Christine O. Avendaño

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RP wins tourism prize

By Jovanne Ausing

THE PHILIPPINES won the "Best Booth Award" in the recently concluded Guangzhou International Travel Fair (GITF) in Guangdong province, China, tourism officials revealed.

Tourism Secretary Joseph Ace Durano, who headed the 30-man Philippine delegation to the fair, described the award as "a triumph for the whole Philippine tourism industry," saying it was the result of the "collaboration and synergy" of the country's government and private components.

Beating the DOT's new marketing slogan for the Chinese market, "Wow Philippines! My Holiday Paradise," the Philippine booth hosted 27 other countries' exhibits, being hailed as the country with the best "beach holiday concept" and the best marketing efforts.

An estimated 120,000 travel professionals and visitors swooped to the fair, which was held at the Guangzhou International Convention and Exhibition Center on March 3-6.

The GITF was held simultaneously with the First China International Online Travel Fair.

Durano thanked Philippine consul general in Guangzhou Rolinda Cortes and her staff for helping organize and initiate activities that drew visitors to the Philippine pavilion.

The DOT chief said the Philippine team engaged in an aggressive "marketing blitz" during the travel fair.

The team's private sector members forged "pasalo" or personal relationships with their Chinese counterparts, closing business deals, providing information on Philippine beach destinations, and were inviting them to visit the country this summer, Durano said.

The Bureau for Philippine National Folk Dance Company performed cultural dances on a daily during the event.

While in Guangzhou, Durano and Philippine Ambassador to China Wilfe Uoo met with local travel agents, tour operators, hoteliers, airport and resort representatives, and the media to promote the country.

The secretary also discussed with the Chinese city's municipal tourism bureau director Li Nan his possible joint projects to strengthen and increase tourism between the Philippines and China.

"THE GUY" REMEMBERED
Sen. Ramon Magsaysay Jr. and his sister, Mila Magsaysay-Valenzuela, lay flowers at the tomb of their father, President Ramon Magsaysay, at the North Cemetery on the occasion of the 48th anniversary of the latter's death in a Cebu plane crash on March 17, 1957.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Friday, March 18, 2005
5th Week of Lent

1st Reading: Jer 20:10-13
Gospel: John 10:31-42

The Jews picked up stones to throw at Jesus, as he said, "I have openly done many good works among you who by the Father gave me to do. For which of these do you stone me?"

The Jews answered, "We are not stoning you for doing a good work but for insulting God; you are only a man and you make yourself God."

Then Jesus replied, "Is this not written in your Law—I said: you are gods? So those who received this word of God were called gods and the Scripture is always true. Then what should he said of the one anointed and sent into the world by the Father? Am I insulting God when I say 'I am the Son of God?'

"If I am not doing the works of my Father, do not believe me. But if I do them, even if you have no faith in me, believe because of the works I do, and know that the Father is in me and I in the Father."

Again they tried to arrest him, but Jesus escaped from their hands. He went away again to the other side of the Jordan, to the place where John had baptized, and there he stayed.

Many people came to him and said, 'John cleared no miraculous sign, but he spoke of this man and everything he said was true.' And many became believers in that place.

Commentary

Again and again they try to silence and kill Jesus by stoning him to death for the words of truth that confront and convict their unjust life. He stands his ground and asks them to name which of his good deeds they are killing him for. They say they are killing him for insulting God (they think) and for being only a man, who seeks to make himself God. Jesus declares: "I am the Son of God," I was sanctified to be all traditions and they are being stubborn, resisting the power of his works that his words proclaim. He then draws the line: if I'm not doing the works of my Father, then don't believe me. But if he wants to fulfill in all the same. Do not do the works of our Father, following in the footsteps of Jesus, our Lord? Or were found all our often among those who condemn others, not because of the good they do consistently, but ignoring them just because we are stung to the heart by their words?

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SUPREME COURT DOCTRINES

JUDICIAL ETHICS—Sheriff should account for money received—The respondent committed an impropriety for which he should be administratively liable. Respondent admitted that he received from complainant redemption money after the auction sale took place. His allegation that he accepted the money upon complainant's insistence and suggestion that he accept the same not in his capacity as sheriff, would not absolve him from liability since he also admitted that complainant approached him because he was the one who auctioned the property. Respondent, by the very nature of his function, must at all times act above suspicion. All moneys acquired by a sheriff should be duly receipted for, otherwise, it would be in violation of the General Auditing and Accounting Rules. Respondent should not have accepted the money considering that by the very nature of things, the money could not be receipted by officially as it was not given to him in his official capacity. The respondent is guilty of misconduct in office. Public office is a public trust. Public officers and employees are duty bound to serve with highest degree of responsibility, integrity, loyalty and efficiency and shall remain accountable to the people. Persons involved in the administration of justice, ought to live up to the strictest standard of honesty, integrity in the public service. The conduct of every personnel connected with the courts should, at all times, be circumspect to preserve the integrity and dignity of our courts of justice. (Office of the Court Administrator, Supreme Court vs. Manolito Mendoza, Sheriff IV, Regional Trial Court, Branch 32, Gumaca, Quezon, Judge Antonio Marcelino, Second Circuit, Gumaca, Quezon, Presiding Judge, Municipal Trial Court, Plaridel, Quezon, Adm. Matter No. P-04-1897, November 1, 2004) 441 S. 1 Phil

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SPORTS

THE PROTAGONISTS

Manny Pacquiao (right) and Erik Morales of Tijuana, Mexico, pose during a news conference Wednesday (Thursday morning in manila) announcing their March 19 "Casting as with Everything" showdown at the MGM Grand Garden Arena in Las Vegas, Nevada. Despite being two inches shorter than the Mexican boxing icon (47-3-0 win-loss-draw), Pacquiao (39-2-2) remains the betting favorite among oddsmakers in the world's gambling capital.

Pacquiao attacked, called a quitter A18

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Sour spaghetti downs 85 kids

Front page A1

fated from diarrhea after they ate spaghetti and fried chicken given to them at the daycare center in Barangay Macrin in Concepcion.

Dr. Ricardo Enano, chief of the Tarlac Provincial Hospital (TPH) in Tarlac City, said 57 patients were taken to the hospital on Wednesday night. Another 28 patients, who were earlier taken to various hospitals in Concepcion and Capas towns, were transferred to the TPH yesterday morning.

The victims, most of them aged 3 to 7 years, were not in critical condition, Enano said.

Spoiled food

"We have diagnosed that all of the patients suffered from staphylococcus infection, which is caused by microbes usually found in spoiled food," he said.

In Mission City night elementary pupils were brought to the Integrated Provincial Health Office (IPHO) hospital after eating the meals of a local herb known as "tuba cebo" which they picked on their way home.

Odelita and Orlanito Santos, who cooked the food at the daycare center, had been moved for questioning by DOH doctors.

Initial information gathered by the DOH team showed that the spaghetti was cooked at 2 p.m. "Dinner can be fixed at home between 7 p.m. and 8 p.m." Odelita said.

At around 10 p.m., 10 cases in barangay chain that extends farther began receiving complaints and requests for help from the hospitals. The children were taken in various hospitals starting 11 p.m. on Wednesday.

At least 52 children were confined at the TPH after they complained of stomach aches, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea, at least four mothers and a father who fell sick after they ate the leftovers that their children took home.

Delicious but sour

Those children were taken to the Central Luzon Doctors' Hospital while several others were confined at the Concepcion District Hospital.

One of the victims, Gelly Samol, 12, said some parents and children ate the spaghetti at around 8 p.m. and experienced symptoms of food poisoning after at least four hours.

Jay-7 year-old son, Bejoar, and his cousin, 6-year-old Bella Mae Tuazol, were also taken to the TPH.

"The spaghetti seemed spoiled, but it was still delicious so we decided to continue eating. Others said the sour taste could have come from the sauce," Samol said in Pilipino.

THIS time, it's spaghetti that downed at least 85 children and some adults in Concepcion, Tarlac, after graduation rites for daycare pupils.

Lab tests

Orlanito said the DOH team had taken samples of the spaghetti for laboratory testing at the IPHO research institute in Manila.

He said the team would try to find out if the mass food poisoning, the first reported in the region this year, was due to unsanitary preparations, food contamination, water borne virus or other reasons.

In Southern Leyte, eight pupils of the Sudlong Elementary School in Maasin were confined at the hospital early morning of Wednesday after they vomited and suffered from diarrhea.

"They were poisoned after eating seeds of a local herbal plant," said Leonor Ortega, administrator of the IPHO.

The victims remained hospitalized yesterday. Orlanito said they might be released today.

Cure for itchiness

He said the pupils were on their way home when they saw the fruits of the cebo tuba and ate them, believing that these were edible.

Tuba cebo (*Heliotropium racemosa Mimo*) is an evergreen tree with leaves resembling that of a guardian. It grows practically everywhere in Southern Leyte.

The leaves and seeds of the tuba cebo are known to cure itchiness. It been found from that rare yellow when ripe. The fruits are, however, poisonous.

In July 2000, 52 pupils of the Cabanagan El. ementary School in Bontoc City were hospitalized after eating seeds of the tuba cebo.

Basin poisoning

Dr. Roger Agbulos, Bontoc-Sagada City's health officer, had said the children suffered from fruits poisoning.

Dr. Bee Cacanog of the Bontoc-Sagada City Medical Center was also quoted as saying that eating the poisonous seeds could lead to complications, such as gastrointestinal bleeding, seizures, vomiting, convulsions and even death if not properly treated.

The latest incidents came on the heels of a whole-week food poisoning last week in Bulacan town in Bohol, where 27 schoolchildren died after eating food rations. Health officials said the rice crop was contaminated with pesticide. (*Diary on Page A11*) — **Russell Arnaiz, Rosario Bryan and Rosalida Bitoon, PhilCare; Orel Lauzon Deeb, and Joel Arnaiz, PDI Tanyan Barcon**

Solar power lights up Eternal Flame of freedom

Front page (cont.)

The state-of-the-art system was dedicated early this month by the Gerogulos Foundation and the Filipino-American Memorial Endowment Inc. (FAME), and has since cast the monument in full brilliance from dusk till dawn.

The solar-lit monument is a large steel sculpture symbolizing the flame of freedom burning eternally. Erected on a raised platform above a reflecting pool, it is located behind the Pacific War Memorial Center of Peace amid the island's memorial complex. Several monuments stand on the island of Bataan located on the west coast of the island-shaped island.

The complex, built by the US government was completed in 1966. The monuments are reminders of the memorable battle fought there in 1942 and its liberation in 1945. Among the most notable is the Monument of the Eternal Flame.

Designed by Antonio Limsiaco, the sculpture commemorates the sacrifices and the heroic struggle by the Philippines and the United States to preserve freedom for future generations.

"The silent, reliable quality of solar power matches the solemnity of the site, while preserving the environmental integrity of the entire island," said Lt. Col. Artemio Medina of the Gerogulos Foundation.

Prohibitive cost

Despite original provision for floodlighting the monument, the feature was never implemented. The cost of power generation on the island for such proved prohibitive for the budget of the Gerogulos Foundation Inc.

In light up the Eternal Flame Monument had been long the dream of the foundation, particularly the late Col. Alfred Steven Bergen, a Bataan veteran, and the members of FAME, which assists the OPC in its projects.

The ceremony up at the monument saw 20 persons effected all, even solar panels manufactured in the Philippines by SunPower Corp., a subsidiary of Cypress Semiconductor Corp., a US-based maker of high-performance silicon devices.

Electric power generated through these 200-watt solar panels is stored in batteries beneath the base of the sculpture and transmitted from cables so as not to mar the site's aesthetics.

The solar powered lighting project was also supported by the Department of Energy and 2-Freight Philippines.

Symbol of freedom

"I am those solar powered lights as a symbol of the freedom men have 60 years ago," said WAR first vice president Leslie Ann Morris, who was a 7-year-old girl when she and her American parents were imprisoned by the Japanese along with other foreigners in Manila during the war.

Formed in 1986 under the auspices of the American Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines, WAR is an organization dedicated to the preservation of WWII memorials in the country, especially for the youth who know next to nothing about the war.

Among its ongoing projects is the replacement of lost "Death March" markers from Bataan to Tarlac.

On March 2, 1945, Gen. Jonathan Wainwright surrendered "The Rock" after three years of Japanese control, with the landing of the 503rd RCT Parachute Regimental Combat Team.

Today, the tranquil island is a tourist attraction dotted by caves, shrines and markers, and a pilgrimage site for the men and women who fared daily the Japanese invaders. With a report from team Arnaiz

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CEBU PACIFIC

Solon says Filipinos ready for divorce

By Philip C. Tubeza

PASTILLAS: Rep. Gina Marin unveils the first bill for "Divorce-style" divorce by filing a bill in Congress yesterday to legalize the dissolution of marriages.

But Marin, a member of the militant Bayinlak women's group, anticipated criticism by saying that she has dual citizenship and would not countenance quickie divorces.

"We will not have Filipino couples do a Britney Spears with marriages getting annulled in less than 24 hours after the ceremony. We will have safeguards against abuses. Divorce will be seen as the last resort of those in unhappy and abusive marriages," she said.

Marin said Philippine society was now ready for divorce and her bill would provide for enough safeguards to ensure that the sanctions of marriage and the family were not destroyed.

"Let us keep an open mind. What we are proposing is divorce, Pinoy-style. We will take into consideration not just the need for divorce as an option. This proposal considers our culture, religions and traditions that give importance to the sanctity of Filipino marriage and the family," Marin said.

Under Marin's proposed House Bill No. 9826, couples may apply for divorce if they had been separated for five years and had been legally separated for two years.

Grounds for legal separation—like homosexuality, drug addiction and sexual perversion or infidelity—may apply when there have ceased the "irreparable" breakdown of the marriage.

"Psychological incapacity" and "irreconcilable differences" that lead to the irreparable breakdown of the marriage are also recognized as grounds for divorce.

"The Philippines and Malta are the only two remaining countries in the world without a divorce law. This bill is being introduced based on indications that Philippine society is ready for the legalization of divorce," Marin said.

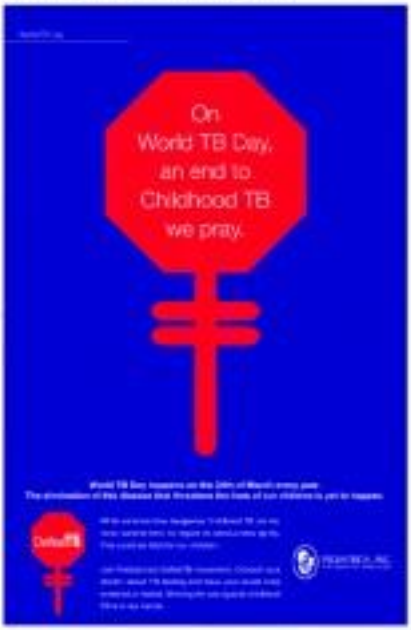
"The sanctity of marriage is not based on the number of marriages existing but on the quality of married relationships. When a marriage is no longer viable, divorce should be an option," she said.

Marin said the pervasive influence of the Catholic Church would ensure that there won't be a runaway divorce case in the country.

"With the preponderance of the Catholic faith in the Philippines, the fear that divorce will erode personal values on marriage appears unfounded," Marin said.

She noted that Italy and Spain, two Catholic countries where divorce is allowed, had low divorce rates.

She argued for divorce being allowed in the Philippines as legal separation does not give estranged couples the right to remarry, while annulments were expensive and last several years for many couples.



Ping: Malice behind news on aide

By Jaime Laboy Jarellano

SEN. PANFILO "Ping" Lacson said yesterday the disclosure on the reported arrest of fugitive former police Supt. Michael Ray Aquino in the United States was meant to pressure him to endorse the confirmation of Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez.

Lacson said he directed initial action on the part of the National Bureau of Investigation and the Department of Justice in coming up media the purported arrest in New York City of Aquino, his close associate when he was national police chief.

Lacson chairs the committee on justice, a standing committee of the Commission on Appointments that will conduct hearings on the confirmation of Gonzalez, whose department oversees the operations of the NBI.

"I can see no other motive for breaking old information to media," Lacson said.

Gonzalez, however, denied Lacson's accusation.

"I had nothing to do with that because the one who asked for cancellation of his (Aquino's) passport was (former Justice Secretary Hernando) Perez," Gonzalez told the Inquirer. "It's (Lacson's) impression is totally wrong."

Lacson claimed that the NBI's report was even erroneous because it said that Aquino had been arrested by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The senator

AQUINO

said his former aide was being held by US immigration authorities.

"The NBI has mother's breasts at the time that the Immigration service of the US is conducting an investigation, why should you blow up the issue?" Lacson said.

The senator also lambasted reporters being leaks-to-him.

"Next why are they linking him to me when I had so many subordinates? Why are they connecting him to me? My name is being mentioned. Why?" Lacson said.

He said his control over Aquino and another ex-police superintendent, Cesar Mancao, had ceased the moment he left the Philippine National Police Management Group's table as the director. Presidential Anti-Organized Crime Task Force, which he once headed.

He said he did not have any communication with Aquino and Mancao since they left the country.

Gonzalez said he just inherited the case against Aquino and Mancao, suspects in the murders of public relations man Fadi Nador and "Subby" Sayoc and his driver, Emmanuel Corbito, in 2000.

"Senator Lacson can talk to people in check if I opened the case. I never touched it," Gonzalez said.

But Gonzalez said he had asked prosecutors in Ilo-ilo province to resolve Aquino's appeal with the Supreme Court to quash the writ for the issuance of a warrant of arrest should the former police official be deported to the country.

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Defensor suspends waste-dumping firm

By Blanche S. Rivera

THE DEPARTMENT of Environment and Natural Resources yesterday suspended the operations of a waste treatment plant in Lanang, Davao, which was reported to be dumping hazardous wastes and chemicals into Laguna de Bay.

Environment Secretary Michael Defensor ordered the temporary closure of Hitachi and Jusmi Environmental Management Corp. for violating its environmental compliance certificate and Republic Act No. 6969 on the control of toxic substances and hazardous and Nuclear Waste Control Act.

"The ECC requires that all facilities wastes collected must not only be properly labeled but also be covered and stored properly. Those who violate the chemicals poisoning must not only be the immediate environment but also to the workers and communities surrounding the facility," Defensor said in a statement yesterday.

The DENR cited also Alsons's stop to the issuance of permits to collect and deliver hazardous wastes to Hitachi and Jusmi.

Bringing along the media, Defensor inspected the firm's facility in Barangay San Isidro in Angono and found several unlabeled drums containing hazardous wastes and neglected installations that had not been properly stored.

Two Hitachi and Jusmi employees reported that the firm usually mixed the hazardous chemicals with the soil and submitted this, or dumped the toxic waste into a nearby river then went out to Laguna de Bay.

The DENR is preparing to file criminal charges against Hitachi and Jusmi owner Angelito Aruta, who allegedly ran violations a total of seven counts each in Region 11 and Angono, Rizal, as well as a permit to operate.

Environment officials also inspected the Waterloo facility on Wednesday and found that the company used at least five sites as dumping ground for toxic wastes collected from various industrial companies.

Some of the wastes found were corrosive liquids, arsenic, sludge and expired medicines, and consumer products.

Boat would be fined and could face up to 12 years in prison if found guilty of violating the 6969.

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Gov't fails to stop Chingkoe

GOVERNMENT prosecutors failed to prevent businessman Jacinto Chingkoe from leaving the country despite the charges he is facing before the Sandiganbayan in connection with a P3.3-billion tax evasion case.

Chingkoe, the head of the Chingkoe group of companies, flew to Hong Kong on Wednesday morning on board Cathay Pacific flight 932, for a connecting flight to the United States and Canada.

Despite the opposition of state prosecutors, the Sandiganbayan Fourth Division, chaired by Associate Justice Gregory Ong, on March 9 granted Chingkoe's petition to travel to Hong Kong, the United States and Canada from March 16 to April 16, subject to certain conditions.

Special Prosecutor Dennis Villa-Ignacio said the government had no choice but to wait for Chingkoe to return.

But he doubted that Chingkoe would be foolish enough to do that.

"Who, if convicted, would be forced to pay back P3.3 million to the government—would return to his wife and children and even already to Canada although the government was asking their extradition.

Barring the conditions required by the court for allowing Chingkoe to leave were that he strictly adhere to his declared itinerary and post a P2.5-million bond.

The Fourth Division also required Chingkoe to report to the court within five days after arriving in the country.

Chingkoe was previously allowed by the court to go to Canada for his daughter's graduation.

In an urgent motion for the court to reconsider its decision to allow Chingkoe to leave, assistant special prosecutor Hivita Orea argued that Chingkoe was a flight risk noting that he was a holder of Canadian, Fijian, Korean and Philippine passports.

Nikko P. Flores

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ASSOCIATE DEAN REMEDIO S. FLORES
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Land exec charged

ELEVEN Land Registration Authority employees were charged graft charges against the agency administrator for allegedly appointing himself chair of a bidding committee and receiving additional compensation.

In a complaint filed with the Office of the Ombudsman, the employees allegedly cited the LRA administrator Reynaldo to illegally appointed himself head of the agency's bidding and awards committee through the creation of the project management committee.

The employees claimed Ubay appointed himself chief of the PMC, which supervises the activities of the BAC.

At head of the PMC, the complaint said, Ubay also receive additional monthly honoraria amounting to P7,218.75, or 22 percent of his annual income as LRA administrator.

According to the employees, Ubay violated Section 13 of the Government Procurement Reform Act, which provides that "each procuring entity shall establish a single BAC for its procurement." Nelson F. Flores

Colonel would have gotten away with it if not for his wife

From page A1

the investigation for possible court-martial for a questionable deal four years ago.

Lagranda is now chief of the Logistics Management Division, which decides what and how much to supplies to procure each year. For when he was still an Army logistics officer in 2000, he helped his wife, Haydie Demetria-Lagranda, corner a contract to supply P937 million worth of equipment for the Army hospital.

According to investigators, Lagranda violated a disqualification that bars members of a military officer's family up to the fourth degree from doing business with the Armed Forces.

He would have gotten away with it had it not been for his wife, the investigators showed.

As it turned out, Haydie merely used the money and the business company of supplier Stelin Abacan to buy the contract.

Ayson did not complain because Haydie initially turned over the Army's check payments to her. She only did so when Haydie reportedly ran off with the P13.7-million balance of the payment in December 2003.

Investigators said two Army finance officers had authorized the highly irregular release to Haydie of the six checks meant for Ayson.

Along with Lagranda, Lt. Col. Ande Delardy, chief of the Materiel and Services Procurement Center (MSPC) under the Army Support Command, and Maj. Ruthbert Ibrahim, chief disbursement officer of the Army Finance Center, are under investigation for court-martial.

Spare him

Upon investigation, Haydie admitted to having transacted with the MSPC, using Ayson's company only as a front, and receiving the six checks.

She reportedly pleaded with the investigators to spare her husband from any charges, claiming that he did not know of her transactions.

The investigators obviously did not buy her assurance, and recommended cases martial for Lagranda, Delardy and Ibrahim.

Gen. Efren Abu, Armed Forces chief of staff, relieved the three officers last Dec. 15 pending the investigation.

But this is now under pressure from a lawmaker to reinstate Lagranda, sources said.

According to the sources, Lagranda was relieved by Gen. Narciso Abaya, then AFP chief of staff, but was soon been reassigned in the post.

Lagranda belongs to Class 1984 of the Philippine Military Academy and Teodulo Class 1985.

The procurement system is the third source of corruption to be military.

The AFP has been shaken lately by high-profile graft cases among top officials led by former comptroller Maj. Gen. Carlos Garcia (ret.).

Abu recently did away with the graft incident. Logistics Command (Logcom) to get rid of one layer of corruption.

'Genyo' offers e-learning kit for HS studes

HSCH school students can now be taught regular subjects like English, Science, Math and Araling Panlipunan using a learning software with innovative features that is touted to be the first of its kind in the Philippines.

Called Genyo, the software is part of an e-learning package called iOtwo v3 Learning Program developed by the iOtwo Asia Publishing Group. It follows the prescribed curriculum of the Department of Education.

Jose Maria Poblenzano, vice president of iOtwo Learning Systems Inc., said Genyo suits the changing requirements of students. "They need new modes of instruction that are more interactive and still allow students to explore and be more creative," Poblenzano said.

Poblenzano said the modules in the software can also be enhanced or customized by teachers to suit their lesson plans.

The publishing group is one of the country's leading publishers of textbooks and educational magazines such as Sanc Salant and Adarpatan. Poblenzano said the product was developed based on the findings that students retain 20 percent of what they see, 30 percent of what they hear, 50 percent of what they see and hear and 60 percent of what they see, hear and do simultaneously.

Some 125 private high schools in Metro Manila and near by provinces have subscribed to the Genyo program.

The e-learning package has other features: connectivity, mobile school, online and teacher training programs.

Using cell phone, iOtwo uses mobile information and messaging service (MESS) to enable students to access information and to enable school authorities to send messages to students. Some MESS features are schoolmate, schedule, iOtbiz, iOplus, online-ing, edknowledge power, mobilemessenger and exam downloads.

The WORLD

Editor Lawrence B. Garcia

2 YEARS OF IRAQ

US rethinks war strategy

WASHINGTON—Still battling insurgents two years after entering Iraq, the US military is being forced to rethink a strategy of winning quick wars with high-tech forces that failed to anticipate such a long conflict.

US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld last month gave the military four "new" problems to tackle. It is undertaking a major review of military capabilities. At the top of his list was building "strategic partnerships" with other countries, defense officials said.

"We want to engage before there is some type of a conflict, and prevent conflicts from becoming wars," one official said. "That is a different mindset in fighting and winning our nation's wars."

It's a shift born of necessity as many US ground forces are tied down in Iraq that the US military would be hard pressed to come up with the troops to fight a second major ground war, so the current strategy calls for, analysts say.

Military leaders insist the United States can respond quickly to contingencies in other parts of the world.

They emphasize that US air and naval power, not American ground forces, are the key deterrent of deterrence in Bush points from Iran to North Korea and Taiwan.

But with the Pentagon facing planning contingencies across "an arc of instability" from the eastern Mediterranean to the Gulf to east Asia, the United States is more likely to need allies over the next 25 years than during the past 15, said Andrew Krepinevich.

"When you look at current deployments there, what you see is US forces are really quite overstretched right now, especially the ground forces," said Krepinevich, who heads a Washington think tank that specializes in military strategy.

He says the Pentagon revamping Cold War-era alliances and giving greater priority to countries like with countries in high risk areas that have large pools of military-age males is a direction for.

Australia, Japan, Singapore, possibly the Philippines, India, Turkey and Israel are among the countries whose importance may grow, he said. Here, some represent among US military alliances, a likely to be less relevant, he said.

The last major strategy review four years ago concluded that US forces should be capable of nearly beating enemies in two major overlapping wars and removing the regime in at least one of them.

It also envisioned a force capable of winning the initiative in 30 days, achieving limited military objectives in 30 days and being ready to move to another part of the world in another 30 days.

In Iraq, the US military got off to a fast start, defeating Saddam Hussein's army in three weeks and capturing Baghdad and toppling the regime of Saddam Hussein from there a month. AFP

PEARL ALLURE
The Hope Pearl, part of an exhibit "The Allure of Pearls," is shown at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History in Washington, March 16. A pearl once owned by the builder of the Taj Mahal, another on loan from actress Elizabeth Taylor, and the Hope Pearl—a former partner to the Hope Diamond—are among a dozen of the world's rarest pearls on display in the exhibit. —

2 Sikhs cleared over worst bombing of civilian plane

VANCOUVER, British Columbia —A Canadian judge cleared two Sikh activists on Wednesday of involvement in the 1985 bombing of an Air India jetliner over Ireland's Atlantic coast, history's deadliest bombing of a civilian airplane.

Shocked families of the 329 victims of the bombing called the ruling devastating and urged the Canadian government to establish a public inquiry into the crime and how it was investigated.

British Columbia Supreme Court Judge Ian Bruce Josephson found Ripudaman Singh Malik and Ajaib Singh Bagri not guilty of murder and conspiracy in connection with the bombing over the Atlantic as well as a related explosion at Tokyo's Narita airport that killed two people.

The veteran solicitors wept in court as the judge read the verdicts following a 174-month trial. Malik, 58, and Bagri, 56, smiled at their families as the hearing ended.

"Oh, my God. Oh, my God," cries of the victim's relatives rang in Josephson's courtroom with the defendants' families minded and hugged each other outside the court.

"I regret to report publicly today what I have told the authorities numerous times since 1985, that I had absolutely no involvement in any of these criminal activities," Bagri said in a statement read outside the court by his daughter, Inderdeep Kaur Bagri.

Malik left the courthouse with his son, supporting him by the arm as he walked. Bagri left with his wife and daughter.

Josephson said the verdict was not an indictment of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, which investigated the bombing, or the police, who built the case against the two men.

"The accused are entitled to the benefit of any reasonable doubt," he said. "It is not enough that I believe that they are guilty, or even that they probably are guilty. They must be proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt."

Malik's lawyer, Michael Code, said the verdict was "a vindication of the rule of law." Bagri's lawyer, Marvin Storrow, said the verdict was "a vindication of the presumption of innocence."

Josephson said the case against the two men was largely circumstantial. He said the Crown had failed to prove that Malik and Bagri had any role in the bombing. AP

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UN report urges action in forested conflict zones

ROME—Governments could save lives and money by better managing the world's forests—areas where conflict is common and armed groups can find shelter and income, said a UN report released Thursday.

More than 40 percent of the world's tropical forests are in countries that have seen wars over the last 10 years, a report by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization said.

In a blueprint of its biennial report for forests—for release at a Rome meeting of government ministers and international experts—the agency drew attention to the link between forests and conflict.

"The real reasons for governments to take action in forests it's very clear that with rather modest investments you could save governments huge amounts of money, lives and political problems," said David Kaimowitz, author of the chapter and director-general of the Center for International Forestry Research, based in Jakarta, Indonesia.

As well as stressing the potential for conflict over valuable raw materials such as oil and diamonds, forests provide shelter and food for fighters, the report said.

Also, "it is in the forest where one often finds poor, isolated populations who are either ignored or mistreated and may need little encouragement to take up arms," said Henry Ali-Sakaty, FAO's assistant director-general for forestry.

"Governments need to take bold steps to recognize the patterned, cultural and territorial rights of ethnic minorities and others living in forested regions," the report said. It urged governments to be particularly vigilant in post-conflict situations, when forests risk being destroyed for profit or providing a haven to armed groups who are likely to restart fighting.

At present, countries including Liberia and Sudan rely on dipping back into conflicts if forest areas are not managed better, Kaimowitz reminded.

On an international level, governments should not overlook that preserve armed groups profiting from the sale of timber—a move that was considered effective against timber exports from Cambodia in the mid-1990s and more recently from Liberia. AP

US actor Robert Blake found not guilty of murdering wife

LOS ANGELES—A jury found actor Robert Blake not guilty on Wednesday of the 2001 murder of his estranged wife and also acquitted the former "Baretta" star of soliciting a former roommate to have her killed.

Blake, 71, hugged his lawyer, lowered a deep sigh of relief and trembled in his seat as the jury's verdict was read after eight days of deliberation, capping a three-month trial.

The Los Angeles County Superior Court jury said it was deadlocked 11-to-1 on a second count of solicitation of murder charging Blake with asking another retired stuntman friend to kill his spouse. The judge then dismissed that charge.

Blake had been charged with shooting to death his wife of six months, Bonny Lee Bakley, 44, in his car outside a Los Angeles area restaurant where they had just dined in May 2001.

He faced life in prison without parole if found guilty.

Blake has said his wife was pursued shoot by an unknown assailant as she waited in his parked car near their favorite restaurant.

He shook with emotion as the verdict was read, burying his head in his hands and seeming to sob. Bakley's adult daughters, Holly Sepp and Christine Bakley, hugged each other consoling, but his family released a statement that expressed sympathy for the victims' relatives but said their anger should be directed at police and prosecutors.

Josephson, who heard 115 witnesses in one of the most complicated and costly cases in Canadian history, called the bombing "despicable and cruelly cares in Canadian history, called the bombing "despicable and cruelly cares in Canadian history, called the bombing "despicable and cruelly cares

Sex industry complicates Japan crackdown on human trafficking

By Natalie Obiko Pearson

TOKYO—Monica's life as a Tokyo prostitute was her own choice. Like thousands of others over the past two decades, she took what she thought was a good offer...but never stuck to Japan's multibillion-dollar sex industry.

Yet Monica had no idea of what awaits foreign prostitutes in Japan: debt bondage, sometimes violent working conditions, so-called fines imposed by pimps or brothel owners for any attempts to escape, and an utter lack of help from authorities.

"The reality is different once you arrive... it's much harder than you ever imagined," says Monica, 32, a Colombian single mother who still works the Tokyo streets. She spoke on condition that only her nickname be used.

The thousands of cases like Monica's put at the center of a mounting crackdown on human trafficking in Japan following the country's placement on a US watchlist last year. Japan was again cited for trafficking in a US human rights report last month.

Affluence and a lack of laws against sex trafficking have combined to make Japan one of the world's top destinations for women like Monica.

In the popular imagination, human trafficking involves women who are kidnapped or otherwise tricked into working as prostitutes. But experts say such cases are rare in Japan. Most common are women who come voluntarily but encounter slave-like conditions...and trapping debts...on arrival.

Root cause

"The Japanese human trafficking problem is the sex industry," said Kazue Inoue, an outspoken Democratic Party lawmaker and anti-trafficking activist who says a crackdown also needs to address the root issue—demand stoked by loosely regulated red-light districts.

Tokyo is moving to clean up its act. The government is expected to pass a law this spring to make trafficking of foreign victims into Japan a criminal offense for the first time. Authorities also have moved to tighten visa requirements for "entertainers"—suspected to be legal cover for foreign sex workers.

"We are in the process of drawing up the necessary measures to effectively battle this," said Minoru Sakaguchi from the Cabinet office overseeing a government anti-trafficking plan released in December. "I think once these are in place, the limits of our efforts will become more evident."

Critics, however, are still waiting to see if Japan is also serious about prosecuting victims. Japan has long treated women like Monica as accomplices to the traffickers who bring them here, deserving of few rights as sex workers and illegal migrants.

Monica was a single mother—she had her daughter at 15—from a poor, violent barrio of Bogota, Colombia, when she was approached by a broker with the offer of sex work in Japan, something that would pay enough to buy her daughter a better future back home in Colombia.

"No one comes because they want to do this work. But we choose to because there's no better option. We want to get out...at any cost," said the petite redhead dressed modestly at a cafe one late night in Shinjuku near one of Tokyo's various red-light districts.

After arriving in 1995, Monica was slapped with a debt of 3 million yen ($48,000) onearth,000—much larger than she'd been told to believe—and warned of reprisals against her family if she tried to escape. Many in Okuganzawa, including Illness, can inflate that debt, she said, and women suffer a brutal physical toll to serving dozens of customers a week, with no days off, to get rid of the debt.

She was able to repay her debt to several months since Japan's economy was their big bring better. But she said others were unwell as lucky, with some finding themselves in bondage for more than a year amid ever increasing fines for various infringements.

1 trillion women

Statistics on women trafficked here are hard to get. Activists estimate more than 1 million may have come since the early 1980s. The Switzerland-based International Organization for Migration calculates that Japan's sex industry hosts about 150,000 foreign workers today.

The Philippines, Colombia and Thailand are the top source countries, says a recent report by the International Labor Organization's Japan office, although anecdotal evidence on the street points to a surging number of Russians, Koreans and Chinese as well.

The sex industry has long been treated with leniency here: red-light districts have openly thrived from the patronage of legitimate businessmen.

Critics have repeatedly alleged ties between traffickers and law enforcement, from immigration officers taking bribes to allow prostitutes into the country on fake passports, to police who return escaped, abused sex workers to their captors. Those allegations are denied by the National Police Agency.

Ginny Alden Dixon, a Columbia University researcher and trafficking expert, says the Japanese government has done little to safeguard sex workers' rights and well-being or ensure they have ways to exit the industry.

"When there's clearly a demand for these people to work in your country, you have an obligation to work out a system that they can do it safely and safely," she says. "It's easier to support them than to deal with them." AP

COURTING CONTROVERSY

Bush taps Wolfowitz to head World Bank

WASHINGTON—US President George W. Bush picked influential global optimist Wolfowitz by putting forward his deeply controversial deputy defense secretary, Paul Wolfowitz, to become World Bank chief.

In a move that could shift the new focus in transatlantic relations, Bush said he selected Donald Rumsfeld's number two at the Pentagon to take over in a role that is central to global development.

Bush said he had already started telephoning foreign leaders in lobby for Wolfowitz, despite the neoconservative's divisive role as a prime architect of the war in Iraq.

The US president highlighted Wolfowitz's experience as the US state department and the Pentagon, and as a previous ambassador to Indonesia.

"Paul Wolfowitz is a proven leader and experienced diplomat, who will guide the World Bank effectively and honorably during a critical time in history—both for the bank and the developing nations it supports," Bush said.

"He has devoted his career to advancing the cause of freedom. He is a person of compassion who believes deeply that lifting people out of poverty is critical to achieving that goal," he said.

Current World Bank president James Wolfensohn is to stand down this summer. Traditionally, the United States nominates the World Bank president and Europe the head of the International Monetary Fund.

But Bush's nomination of Wolfowitz threatens to put that consultant's consensus in the cold.

French President Jacques Chirac said Bush would examine the nomination "in the spirit of friendship" with the United States.

But French Foreign Minister Michel Barnier said Wolfowitz's nomination was only a "proposal", despite the bank job being in the gift of Washington.

"We're going to examine it with respect to his character... and eventually with respect to other candidatures," he said at an EU meeting in Brussels.

WOLFOWITZ

Aside from Iraq, Wolfowitz has attracted global criticism as a leading light of the neoconservative movement, which wants the United States to impose its vision of liberal democracy and free market economies on others.

But the 61-year-old former academic sought to win over his detractors by declaring that he believed "deeply and passionately in the mission of the World Bank."

"The opportunity of working to lift a billion people who earn less than a dollar a day out of poverty and illness of others who live in circumstances of poverty, to give them a chance in life, is an exciting responsibility and a real challenge," he said.

For opponents said the choice of Wolfowitz was a worrying gesture by Bush's foreign policy intentions coming just after the nomination of another arch-hawk, John Bolton, to be the US ambassador to the United Nations. AFP

INQUIRER

OPINION

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A question of martyrs

FOREIGNERS once held homage by the Abu Sayyaf probably expressed what many Filipinos feel. Callie Snyders in South Africa said of Ghaffy Ancheng, alias "Commander Robot": "He probably got the death he was seeking. I suppose in the end he got what was coming to him." Any pity for the fate of the Abu Sayyaf leaders killed in last Tuesday's storming of Camp Bagong Diwa was tempered by a revaluation of their dark deeds.

EDITORIAL

This is a diminution, however, that ignores other realities that serve to overshadow the event. Those killed at Camp Bagong Diwa were buried yesterday in a manner that was intended to proclaim them as "martyrs" for Islam. Instead of being washed, the bodies of the 22 slain were left bathed in their own blood, anointed in the sanguinary proof of their martyrdom. For every "Commander Robot" or "Commander Kosovo" killed, there are cases such as that of Hadji Ahmad Opao, at 75 the oldest fatality and by all accounts, a man overdue for release on humanitarian grounds. He was said to be afflicted with Alzheimer's disease and was bedridden, and he died because, perhaps in an instinctive reversion to the warrior traditions of his youth, he put to his foes when the shooting started.

For many Muslim Filipinos, it is not the supposed poetic justice of a "Commander Kosovo's" death that will relax their indignation, it is the far more common and far sadder realities of the fate that befalls people like Hadji Ahmad Opao. The workaday experience of many Muslims is filled with false accusations, brutal imprisonment, rough and ready persecution masquerading as the justice of the Republic. Filipino Christians can rarely understand why experiences and examples such as Opao's can turn even the deaths of notorious kidnappers and bandits (such as the Abu Sayyaf) into martyrdoms.

Governor Parouk Hussein of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao has tried to explain as much by pointing out that not everyone killed in Tuesday's assault were members of the Abu Sayyaf. There were those who got killed in the attack because they happened to be in jail on account of false charges made by their Muslim or Christian enemies or because of the slow and inefficient workings of our justice system. It is these cases that will resound, those deaths that will be mourned, those examples that will overshadow the deaths of known members of the Abu Sayyaf.

Of greatest concern now is the increasing criticism of Muslims by their Christian brethren for not speaking out more against the Abu Sayyaf, and for giving those killed the benefit of Islamic burial rites and of being mourned by the Muslim community. No one begrudges a Christian the burial rites of his religion, whatever his crime, and no one should criticize Muslims for burying their dead according to the rites of their faith. As for calling upon Muslims to provide a united front in criticizing the Abu Sayyaf, this ignores the larger and smaller dynamics of Muslim society in our country. Larger, because the Abu Sayyaf, for all its bloodthirsty abuses, is a manifestation of Christian policies of repression, neglect and exploitation in Mindanao, and smaller, because the ties of blood and family can eclipse all other considerations.

For now, the Abu Sayyaf continues as luck like a winner: It now claims martyrs, and has planted the seeds of doubt in the minds of at least some who suspect a government rubout. Its members were not in a manner of their own choosing; they have been buried in a manner that inspires romance and admiration among their followers. The government is now faced with the Herculean task of trying to change public opinion not among Christians, whose biases at least make them somewhat impervious to romanticizing the Abu Sayyaf, but among Muslims, who are torn between admiring their obviously reckless courage, and the realization that in the face of Christian guns, there is no distinction between the bad Abu Sayyaf and elderly prisoners like Opao.

The only way to seize momentum is the hardest: to slowly, but surely, eliminate all doubts that those in jail deserve to be there, and aren't imprisoned because of bad luck, poverty, the enmity of others or, worst of all, their religion.

Greedy QC councilors want to hike realty taxes

YOU think it's bad enough that prices of everything, including government fees, are going up? Wait, it's going to get worse, at least for those who live and do businesses in Quezon City.

Some councilors have filed a proposed ordinance to increase the real estate taxes from the present 15 percent to the maximum 20 percent for residential and to 50 percent for commercial properties. This is an outstanding example not only of greed and oppression by certain councilors but also of their stickiness.

To follow proper legal requirements, the councilors slotted a public hearing on the proposal 9 a.m. of March 9. But it seen not the motives to homeowners' associations also scheduled March 9, 9 a.m. That they took was obviously to prevent many property owners from opposing the measure so that the councilors can say there was no opposition during the public hearing.

But there need not be any opposition to taxes that the proposed increases are unjustified and are just intended for the reelection of councilors. If passed this year, the increased taxes will be collected starting next year in time for the councilors' projects to aid their 2007 reelection.

There are at least four good reasons why no increase in real estate taxes at this time is unjustified.

1. The QC government doesn't need the extra money. It is now the richest city in the country, as city treasurer Victor Endrija boasted in a press release. For the third straight year, he said, QC emerged as "the richest city in the country" with an income beating even Makati, the business capital, and Manila. Last year, QC had a total revenue of P6.4 billion as compared to Makati's P4.5 billion and Manila's P3.5 billion. QC has a cash surplus of P2 billion and a budgetary surplus of P1B1.7 million. Clearly, QC is not in need of additional revenues. The biggest collections came from real estate and business taxes. He also said then that the councilors want to squeeze again.

2. This is not the time to raise taxes. Prices of

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

everything are going up—food, fuel, transport fares, toll fees, premiums, electricity rates, phone bills, rent rates, etc.—the unfortunate cut of all, government and private fares. On the other hand, salaries and wages are not going up. Where will the people get the additional money to pay for all this? But the QC councilors, in an extraordinary demonstration of greed and crass opportunism, will add to the people's burden by raising real estate taxes.

3. The tax money that the government collects does not go to help the taxpayers. In exchange for the taxes the people pay, the government is supposed to provide them with basic services, including the protection of their lives and properties. But in QC, the government does not protect the properties of the law-abiding citizens from squatters, neither does it help them eject the squatters. Ask City Hall for help in preventing the entry of squatters or in ejecting them from your property and you will be given the runaround. On the contrary, it seems more eager to protect the lawbreakers. Commission even use tax money to build landbanked county in the middle of streets for the squatters. In short, the taxes collected from law-abiding property owners are used not for their benefit but for the benefit of those who break the law and don't pay taxes. In effect, the money the taxpayers pay are used against them, abuses heaped on injuries.

4. Even if the local Government Code allows local government units to increase real estate taxes by 50 percent and 100 percent for industrial and commercial properties, respectively, this is not mandatory. Those are the limits. And they were put there precisely to prevent LGUs from being too greedy and abusing their powers. Councils are supposed to use their better judgment in passing ordinances, so that they will observe the fair to their constituents. They are supposed to serve their constituents, not to take advantage and oppress them.

* * *

The QC Council has another hand-raising idea to squeeze more money out of their constituents. It wants to tax private trucks. There are the trucks that private subdivisions use which the city government did not spend a single centavo either to develop or maintain. The subdivision developers built them and the homeowners' associations maintain them. Homeowners collect their own garbage, pay for their street lights, fund their own security guards, develop and maintain their own parks. The city government does not do anything for them, except collect their taxes.

Not content with what it is already collecting all-bought, as stated earlier, it already has more than enough money to spend. Now, to be greedy, it wants more by imposing higher real estate taxes and now by taxing even private trucks.

What is the justification for taxing private trucks? The government does not maintain them; its policemen do not protect them; it does not clear them. So what is the tax for?

Many subdivisions are afraid to turn over their streets to the city government because when they do, the streets will not be maintained, there will be no security, there will be traffic anarchy, and there will be a headache to prevent subdivisions.

I suggest that the councilors, instead of enumerating on the evils of private subdivisions, first pay attention to the anarchy in public streets. Get the vendors off the sidewalks, make the drivers obey traffic rules, and make car owners responsible for riders on the middle of streets but in designated loading/unloading areas.

Legal limbo in Bush's war against terror

UNTIL recently, the prisoners held at Guantanamo, a US military base in Cuba, were to legal limbo and Guantanamo itself was, in the words of the US Supreme Court, "a lawless enclave." The Bush administration announced in early 2002 that detainees captured in Afghanistan could not enjoy prisoner-of-war status under the Geneva Conventions, and began taking prisoners to Cuba for indefinite detention and interrogation. On the other hand, if they were not POWs, they must be plainly terrorists and thus common criminals. Before long they were captured and detained abroad, they were unable to have their habeas corpus petitions heard by US courts—until the Rasul and Hamdi decisions by the US Supreme Court.

US President George Bush's war on terror has been twice thwarted, before the US Senate and the US Supreme Court, despite a political-by-massive-home-court advantage. First, it was Filipino-American Maj. Gen. Antonio Taguba, who headed early last year before the 9/11 Democrat-led Senate Armed Services Committee, a "Report on the Investigation of the 800th Military Police Brigade," which exposed prisoner abuses at the Abu Ghraib Prison in Baghdad.

The second was when the Supreme Court, despite the Bush claim that as Chief Executive and commander-in-chief, he had the power to detain indefinitely without charges even American citizens declared enemy combatants" on American soil without giving them their day in court.

In Rasul v. Bush(not Bush), the Court held that American courts may decide whether foreign nationals were rightfully imprisoned in Guantanamo Bay.

Shafiq Rasul, a British citizen, and David Hicks, an Australian, had filed a habeas corpus petition, which would have required a US court to exercise jurisdiction over a prisoner held by US soldiers on foreign soil. The US Government argued that the US had "complete jurisdiction" over the base, but Cuba had "ultimate sovereignty." The Court held that the "complete jurisdiction" clause empowered it to hear the habeas corpus petitions, because Stephen Breyer stated, "[U]nder settled law, the detainees may invoke the habeas jurisdiction that the executive would be free to do whatever they want... without a check."

In Hamdi v. Defense Secretary Rumsfeld, the Court recognized the power of the government to detain unlawful combatants, but ruled that detainees must have the ability to challenge their detention before an impartial judge. By implication, it disallowed the three-man panels devised by the Pentagon to preempt criticism that the US had fallen short of the promise of war protections available under the Geneva Conventions.

Yaser Esam Hamdi is a US citizen who was captured in Afghanistan, held in Guantanamo and eventually transferred to a South Carolina detention facility. The government contended that Hamdi had been caught taking up arms against the US and could be detained indefinitely as an unlawful combatant. The powers never argued that this was needed to fight the "war on terror" following the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks to ensure that dangerous terrorists would no longer be a threat and could be fully interrogated. Justice Sandra Day O'Connor said that "a state of war is not a blank check for the president when it comes to the rights of the nation's citizens."

America is holding around 600 prisoners at the Cuban station, mostly captured in the early

PASSION FOR REASON

René C. Pangalangan

months of the war against the Taliban and al-Qaeda in Afghanistan. Some 250 have already been released without charge, and almost 70 have been charged with crimes.

Of late, more disclosures have come from within the walls of Guantanamo. US military authorities have found that interrogators have used "abusive interrogation techniques" (but the Navy's general counsel considered "unlawful and unworthy of the military services." One practice that bogged the headlines for a while was the sexual degradation of male prisoners by female interrogators swearing things and other sexist paraphernalia. These "coercive" and "aggressive" techniques are certainly sinful, unchaste and unbecoming, but the rules of custom disseminated in our history but they certainly pull the rug from under the high moral posture taken by Bush after Sept. 11.

Bush had fiercely resisted the power of the newly created International Criminal Court to try US citizens, arguing that it would violate the dignity of POWs), only to be taken to task eventually before his country's own courts. The US Supreme Court rulings repudiate the notion that the war on terrorism is beyond the reach of the rule of law and of the courts.

Given what is at stake, Justice Jackson's "Gideon's arm is open your arms for the laws fall silent amid the clash of arms)," said was indeed has been seen in the vanishing point of law for over anymore. Today, the law of armed conflict is a distant branch of international law. It aims, from the law war theory that sanctions carnage to humane defense powers to prevent the unnecessary of one's own. Instead it legitimizes merely the means by which armies fight, and ensures the dignity of innocent civilians, injured combatants and POWs. Bush's claim of sovereign and presidential prerogative is no brand. One is not an terror but a terrorist by espousing the rhetoric of uninformed self-righteousness on which America's enemies have thrived.

* * *

Comments to rcpang@info.com.ph

A frivolous legal exercise

ANALYSIS

Amando Doronila

WHAT started as a criminal libel case filed by former Tourism Secretary Roberto Romulo against Max Soliven, publisher of The Philippine Star and some of its editors, has become an open-ended saga that has gone beyond the issue of abuse of press freedom.

Until on the brink of the libel complaint, Romulo came under retaliatory attack from fellow Cabinet member Francisco Chavez, who filed graft charges with the Office of the Ombudsman against Romulo, Soliven and other officials of the Philippine Tourism Authority (PTA) in connection with the controversial graft case by luring in a "conflict of interest" situation, summoning them to petition as amici curiae, or friend of the court, in the libel case.

The graft charges dragged the dispute between Romulo and the Star into another area that has little or no do with press freedom, or specifically, the scope of the Philippine press to discipline its members through self-regulation. It has also exposed the deep cleavages in the society over the role of the press in the post-Edsa era.

The libel complaint against the graft charges upon a new issue that has raised concerns in the private sector, as well as in government, over the implications of the case for the time-honored practice of upping the ante/sues and exposure of corruption in transactions involving private sector participation in government projects. Should the Office of the Ombudsman uphold Chavez's views, such a development would deter economic private sector investment in government projects because the people in public service and would create those already serving as advisers to quit their part-time government jobs or divest themselves of their private holdings, because those would put them in a "conflict of interest" situation and, and make them liable for criminal charges like one graft suit.

Chavez's contention in his case by making a sweeping accusation that Romulo held key positions in a number of private corporations in local companies engaged in areas governed by his "portfolio." He then maintains that Romulo "could advise the President to adopt the advocacies of his select group in matters of international finance, etc." Romulo is listed as chairman, director, or trustee in their private business in those very subjects that are covered by his portfolio."

Chavez is climbing too much, implying, without proof, that Romulo has been using his position in the Cabinet to influence decisions by government in favor of companies where he has a "conflict of interest" situation.

These charges put Chavez on shaky grounds. They are based on the supposed conflict of interest of his holding positions in private companies covered by his "portfolio" as presidential adviser was sufficient to establish conflict of interest. This is a dangerous doctrine. Violation of the anti-graft law is a serious criminal offense, punishable by prison sentences. Chavez consciously or blunder lays this doctrinal assumption to build a case on graft.

Chavez did not attempt to establish an instance of graft. Where criminal action for graft is taken, it is not the mere existence of the position in a private or which influence was peddled and exchanged for favors, as in which committing intrinsic unlawful. Chavez did not attempt to demonstrate that the existence of incompatible interests in Romulo's case in connection with processing his evidence that graft has actually been committed than just building a case based on hypothetical situation. Otherwise, he can't be taken seriously.

As Romulo has pointed out, "There is a settled distinction, under our administrative and penal codes, between public officers and officers in government. The former owes God-like duty that a public officer performs a sovereign function for which he can sign legal documents on behalf of the government, and as adviser or consultant cannot.

"The Anti-Graft Law explicitly says that in order for graft, a public officer must be paid a salary or compensation for his services, as officer or consultant does not have such compensation."

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"The Anti-Graft Law explicitly says that in order for graft, a public officer must be paid a salary or compensation for his services, as officer or consultant does not have such compensation."

'Beijing + 10' ends on an 'odd' note

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

UNITED NATIONS—Almost a week ago, the "Beijing + 10" conference, officially known as the 49th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, was over as Hedda Bolgar, Finland's delegation, was to say at its closing.

The two-week conference, which went through a rocky, contentious start, ended in a relatively calm way, with the adoption of a document of "consensus language" that was more or less the same as the one that was rejected by the 10th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, which was held in Beijing.

Apart from reaffirming the Beijing commitments, the document also reflects the "new realities" of significant happenings which, together with the final declaration, will become part of the 10th High Level Meeting (Millennium Review) in September, to be attended by more than 170 heads of government, including President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Part of the resolutions adopted by the plenary was reviewed by the Philippines' one ruling by the chairperson of a gender perspective in the plenary, including the resolutions which, together with the final declaration, will become part of the 10th High Level Meeting (Millennium Review) in September, to be attended by more than 170 heads of government, including President Macapagal-Arroyo.

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As an observer, who worked closely with the Philippine delegation, I was privileged to be invited to join the delegation's, to be, the most engaged, dynamic and prolific that I have worked with. The Philippine delegation was co-chaired by Ambassador Lauro Baja, the UN Envoy to Iraq and National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC) head commissioner Mely Nicolas.

[illegible] despite the successful outcome, the conference ended on a sour note, with the United States isolated in its attempt to derail the consensus reached and finalized in its

Street names

LOOKING BACK

Amben B. Ocampo

broaded, doesn't in any light the fill can do unless it is supposedly public courage.

Last year, there was a move to change Epifanio Rodriguez to street Tomatoes Boulevard. In the Visita, who also teaches at the Bread and Intellectual Property Law Center, Ateneo de Manila University, headed by Spanish Dominican whose main purpose is using Spanish came up with a position paper that should be taken in consideration to use another proposal to change our street names.

"Instead sadly, Epifanio belongs to a series of streets that had something to do with Spain. There are seven names such as Galicia, Sigwan, etc. Guatemalans and Canadas, which are Spain. The Spanish Embassy, Manila Cristina, was named after the Duchy of Spain who served as Spain during the 19th century. Epifanio de los Santos, who is also a street named Con Dolores, the main personality in the novel by Miguel de Cervantes. Other streets are by the names of streets in Spain: Roosevelt, Malhopo, Pedernito and Comercio. The rest were named after the Spanish and Americans of the former mayor, such as Elcano, Adelina, Paspasa, etc. Note the boundary of Quezon City the streets resembling Espana have names that relate to the Jose Rizal University, Ateneo's professors Craig (after Austin Craig, one of Rizal's biographers), Merlin, Jaen and Ateneo's classmates to Sto. Tomas suggest. The point of these letters shows an anti-Spain policy that could be easily destroyed by the renaming of even one of them.

Dr. Jo Daus thru comments his interest:

"There are cases where the renaming of streets was pushed through even if the bill interposed objection. Some renaming have taken place even without consultation with the MTC ... To my knowledge, there are already some streets along Espana. I had been told by people working on Espana's consultation with the MMC. Those are: Concepcion (now Cristobal), Dapa (now Mariano), and Padre Faura (now Antonio Luna). But Dr. Lewis Gleeck, historian and author of the book, "Manila Man (now Tolentino), Economia (now Bilaran de la Paseo), Tabaco (now Alvarez L. Dean) and Magdalena (now Antonio Maceda)."

He also go on with historical and emotional reasons to change Espana. Dr. Jo Daus dug up a little known fact that provides a legal basis:

"The land where Espana Boulevard is located was donated by Antonio de la Rosa, owner of the Tuason Estate, to the University of Santo Tomas (UST) if shall be turned over the Bethel Institute. In 1952 the City Council of Manila acted to rename the boulevard but the heirs of de la Rosa reminded city officials of the conditions of the donation. Furthermore, the UST Board of Trustees (BOT) argued, as indicated by its action seven signs. City roads are indicated by blue street signs. National roads are not under the jurisdiction of local government units. Hence, the City of Mandaluyong Code cannot be used as basis for the renaming.

"Instead of renaming the boulevard, Espana should be improved and beautified since a thoroughfare befits Spanish heritage. It could be the Spanish Embassy, Manila Cristina, was named after the Duchy of Spain who served as Spain during the 19th century. Epifanio de los Santos, who is also a street named Con Dolores, the main personality in the novel by Miguel de Cervantes. Other streets are by the names of streets in Spain: Roosevelt, Malhopo, Pedernito and Comercio. The rest were named after the Spanish and Americans of the former mayor, such as Elcano, Adelina, Paspasa, etc. Note the boundary of Quezon City the streets resembling Espana have names that relate to the Jose Rizal University, Ateneo's professors Craig (after Austin Craig, one of Rizal's biographers), Merlin, Jaen and Ateneo's classmates to Sto. Tomas suggest. The point of these letters shows an anti-Spain policy that could be easily destroyed by the renaming of even one of them.

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Language, context, politics and health

PINOY KASI

Michael L. Tan

PEOPLE often wish we could figure out what's in people's minds. Parents wish teenage kids, for example, sometimes extremely "Are you mad at me?" "What's in that head?" and so on.

Well, you'll know it' you'll just listen to what the kids say, or don't say. Even those grunts they use to answer our questions have meanings. "Can't you see I'm grunting up? I'm happy I have you, but leave me alone."

I digress. My point is that we can learn about people's values, views, world views by listening to what they are (and, again, don't say). Anthropologists do this all the time, and it's a skill I've been trying to pass on to physicians and health professionals. To fully delve beyond mere utterances, I've urged them to listen, and to hear what they are saying in their patients and their patients' families.

It's a matter of listening in context. For one health problem, dengue, a "fever" may be a lump on the head. Or it can be used to refer to a "fever" that is not fever. Or it can be used by some mothers in detail of a more serious problem. Now, when a doctor says they've found a "fever" on a patient, that person sometimes can cause hysteria because it's immediately interpreted as a death sentence ground.

These examples show how important cultural differences that exist even among people who think they share a common culture. Doctors and patients may use Filipino and we misunderstand each other because there are different interpretations of the same words. In a sense then, even Filipinos speak to Filipinos-modern-day "translators."

LOANED WORDS

Because words are so powerful, we have to be suspicious about how they're used. Last Wednesday, I wrote about how particular sex now often referred to as "gamot" (medicine), which both celebrates and reinforces Filipinos' curative attitude toward medicines. It also reinforces the idea that sex is dangerous, that they can't be kept inside the house, often even how to bed. The risk of poisoning is all too real, as that latter happened in Makati. Sobel, resulting in the deaths of 28 schoolchildren.

I urged a return to the term "lason" (poison) to refer to pesticides, but now realizing it's unreal image of a skull and crossbones "Lason" is a powerful word that tells us, "Danger!" I've also been using the term when talking with drug legislators, a way of reminding them that they're poisoning themselves. I do this because "drugs" and "banned na gamot" (illegal medicines) don't convey the same sense of danger. Sometimes, words that carry the sense of danger but in an alluring and challenging way. "Droga," in the context of countless very Filipino cursory with every other celebrity now hooked, evokes "Tis na" rather than "Sasakyan."

ANOTHER BORN AGAIN

Context is so important that Anthropologist Mahir Ingal, who lives in Ifugao, knows that, instead of her studying my relatives to point out risk in Bokasio, "gamot" actually means poison. The Ifugaos used for medicine is "ugan." So, I asked her how the words are used in her area and, hold your breath, they use "lason" to refer to medicines. Ingal's explanation makes the last points, which is fine in the Bokasio context because gamot does mean poison. But staff used to apply gamot, as well as sensory-neutral shortcuts, are "ugan" or medicine.

Since why should we poison be called poison and penicillin medicine? I don't have certain answers here, but maybe it's because the effects of the poison (which we also call "lason" in Filipino) are seen inside. We see the dead rats, but we don't see the dead insects killed by pesticides. Even severed hundred dead termites don't quite have the impact of seeing a dead rat. Maybe we don't see those that have gotten close from burning or exhaustion/fatigue).

My advice to Mahir, who works with non-governmental organizations, is to encourage a semantic shift—a change in meanings—of pesticides from "ugan" (medicine) to "gamot" (poison). It's a really interesting area of research. "Gamot" were calling pesticides "lason," such was the 1960s, much as the names of governments have sometimes worked to persuade disobedient who wanted farmers to see issues of their eventuals. The word "gamot" (as medicine) may at last have some basis people who wanted to lessen some of the chemicals. They were not necessarily "lason" (poison).

'Ligan basis'

Let me move to another example of the ways words mean several health and language, the current controversy around the Department of Health's Ligan Basis.

This first time I heard the term, I knew the DOH was going to get into trouble. It was too vague a term. I was in a meeting when the term was used and everyone asked what the campaign was going to be all about.

The DOH now explains that Ligan Basis means "Safe Pregnancy," with family planning advocacy linked to maternal and child health. Family planning groups, including the Catholic bishops, saw a differently translating "Ligan Basis" into "Safe from Pregnancy."

It's not a misunderstanding, when you think about it. First Donald Lee of the Employers' Confederation of the Philippines, a key player in the business sector, receives television talk show that "Ligan Basis" meant "safe from pregnancy" and added that the theme of the matter was understandable, implying people would not avoid from pregnancy.

NO, surprisingly, the words of our family planning groups has determined on the health departments, with groups like Couples for Christ dismissing observations from the campaign.

I'll have more that "ligan" would not be appropriate here for future columns since examples of serious language shown in medical consultations and in public health campaigns. I don't have to tell you that the use of the wrong words results in reflexes to health. We value health and fear illnesses, so words are all too quickly misinterpreted and misinterpreted.

We have to be conscious of word meanings with context and to listen for our experiences and frame of people those or us. Then, "to talk" takes on a meaning that goes beyond the level of how we and we don't a week after being diagnosed with a "failed." The actual outcome disappears, submerged by our own experiences.

There's politics here as well. Whatever the health department's intentions are, the use of the word "ligan" has undermined the inclusion of family planning, even if marginally, would have raised the interpersonal barriers. If they had their way, there would be no family planning at all in the Philippines, instead of "sterilized."

Despite the limitations of dealing with dogmatic ideologues, I'll still say we need to be careful with words when used in health care. Whether a doctor or a health worker or an NGO worker or a rural health unit midwife, what we say and do as we provide health services and nurture illness will go a long way around our social circles and across generations.

Comments are welcome at ocampo@ateneo.edu.

Bedrock of democracy

FIRST, the Arroyo administration implemented a "no permit, no rally" policy which effectively curtailed the right to peaceful assembly. As a result numerous rallies, pickets and peaceful assemblies were violently dispersed. Even in Plaza Miranda, a freedom park, a lully was savagely dispersed.

Second, the Arroyo administration pushed for a national ID system as part of its war on terror. In reality, it was nothing more than a ploy to control the population in a time of political crisis. The proposal has been junked by the Supreme Court as unconstitutional.

Now comes the proposal to ban the publication or coverage of interviews with rebels or terrorists. The media have been warned that it can be held liable under our anti-coup laws.

Those moves by the Arroyo administration are tantamount to curtailing the people's civil rights and freedoms. It must be remembered that Article III, Bill of Rights, Section 9 of the Philippine Constitution which states:

"No law shall be passed abridging the freedom of speech, of expression, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble and petition the government for redress of grievances."

The government and its police and military forces must be reminded to uphold the fundamental law of the land.

Besides, the definition of "terrorist" is so vague that it is subject to many interpretations. It can include those who oppose the Arroyo administration for its avowed economic policies and those who protest that war on terror that has victimized countless civilians. It can even include communist organizers, human rights activists, social-democratic leaders, women's rights activists, artists, poets, columnists, reporters or anyone that the government chooses to consider a threat to national security.

In the Arroyo administration entering a reversal of the gains of Edsa I and II?

The people struggled valiantly to topple a dictator in 1986. The people again stepped in the streets to oust an inept and corrupt regime in 2001. They fought for freedom, sovereignty, human rights, justice and peace.

These were not in response to threat to government. They were not meant to deteriorate to anti-national chaos. They were not meant to undermine the bedrock of government actions, policies and programs. Our leaders must learn to respect, protect and uphold human rights. Only then will we be able to address the roots of poverty, discrimination, exclusion, social inequity and injustice.

—FE ARGUELLES,
deputy director for Operations
Lumos, Task Force Detainees
of the Philippines
resadmad@info.ny

Protection from within

THE "PEA ARMY" scandal that has made news since January is not limited to neo-communist recruiting for weapons acquisition. Consider the Quinto (PEA) 2/17/05):

And who would know better than someone who got stuffed when it was his time to collect? A simple look at the expenses we've had to endure enough to get out of, but apparently are demands of others who are still holding their breath.

In the United States, "protocols" are set up on basis and in accordance with "standards" established by well behaved laws. And they are run by trustworthy professionals who like their jobs, their blessings and, above all, their livelihood.

I'm not surprised by Quinto had something to say about the need for consumer protection reform in an industry that can't seem to pay its most against those and greed and corruption.

A make-up can't erase more credibility written in the first person singular. But then with De Quinto, trustworthy, what one get is where he's from.

—ELIOTT ANDERSON,
PO Box 2796, Manila City 7200

A solution to RP's woes?

LETTERS

THIS refers to Raymund Isaac's interesting front-page story "Marcos, Lacson, Estrada candidacies" (PDI, 3/4/05). I say a big "yes" to "amnesty" to the proposed.

Ria Sen. Miriam Defensor Santiago is not the first legislator to propose a form of amnesty for political rebels or the issue of public service. Sen. Benigno Aquino made this proposal than all wages, including himself, to close to a living wage.

Defensor's main rationale proposal will also mean the immediate release of hundreds of government officials and employees now languishing in jail cells on trumped-up charges filed by the Arroyo administration.

Another one had a PhD (Public Administration) degree, was a graduate of the prestigious Harvard University, and was a Rhodes scholar, based on the affidavit of detainees executed by the complainant in a robbery case. The crime: asked for the help of a prominent person that subsequently released.

Rainer Rilloraza, in a column (PDI 1/25/05), lamenting the lip service of judges and prosecutors, noted "Majority presumes innocence, especially when the DOJ gives them instant justice like when they executed a suspected comic murder for stealing a poor farmer's carabao," he added: "The delay in the administration of justice by the courts is the biggest reason why vigilante groups have mushroomed in many parts of the country like Davao City and Cebu City. If citizens keep passing justice into their own hands, we might as well get rid of our courts." A return may have no justice for the people?

I guess so, if those in our justice system will wish to their side of ethics. Like what the late Mr. Roxas said in his book "Profiles in Courage," a statesman is one who stands up for principles, while a politician is one who stands up for principles, while a politician is one who stands up for principles, while a politician

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Across the NATION

Send us your feedback: inquirer.net/contact.php?category=1007 (Online) or 891-5314 (fax) Assistant Editor Ruby Rosquete

Exec says Sulu returning to normal

A SOLDIER guards a mosque in Parang, Sulu, at the height of fighting between followers of jailed Moro leader Nur Misuari and government forces. AFP/File

PARANG, Sulu—People in this war-stricken province have started to return to their normal lives, according to President Macapagal-Arroyo's peace adviser.

Jesus Dureza, the President's adviser on Mindanao affairs, said he pledged an additional 100 million worth of relief assistance and 42 more core shelter units, and the construction of water facilities and health centers.

Initially, Sedurco said Benicio Reyeza, secretary of the Department of Social Welfare and Development in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, released three checks amounting to P1.5 million to Brig. Gen. Sergio Catalbas, commander of the 11th Engineering Brigade, for the immediate construction of 52 houses in Panamao as part of the government's core shelter project.

Another check amounting to P210,000 was given to the provincial social welfare office for the supplemental feeding of 66 children suffering from malnutrition for six months. Julie Alipala, PDI Mindanao Bureau

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Health office reports increase in cases of abortion in Negros

By Carlo P Gomez
PDI Visayas Bureau

BACOLOD CITY—Abortion cases in Negros Occidental are on the rise, according to the provincial health office.

In Lalen Ebon, HIV-chief, said 3,400 cases of abortion were reported last year, about three times as many as the number of cases reported in 2006 (949 cases) and 2005 (more than 1,000).

Ebon admitted that last year's figure could even be higher. "Most cases of abortion in the province that have gone unreported," she said.

"Since DOH rules even wounded hen cases the numbers were submitted in hospitals by management of complications caused by abortion done illegally," she said. "The figures are based on actual records for reported abortion cases because patients end up in hospitals for further treatment."

In search of answers

Dra. Joseph Montilla wanted Ebon to validate the 2006 data and break down the figures to find out why the abortion cases in the province were increasing.

The governor also asked the health official to identify illegal clinics operating in the province so that action could immediately be taken.

Ebon said the health department had been trying to check the rising trend of abortion through information and awareness campaigns, such as the Lagtas Buntis Program.

She pointed out that many women suffered from unwanted pregnancies because they were not aware of the available means.

Last month, the Department of Health launched the Lagtas Buntis Program to counteract the growing trend of abortion among teenagers.

Funds

Some P1.16 million was allocated for the campaign, with about P0.85 million coming from the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office and the rest from the DOH budget.

The campaign targets pregnant women, as well as men and women of reproductive age, in reach-out barangay and various talk and legally accessible family planning methods.

Ebon said Lagtas Buntis was designed to inform parents on proper birth spacing to ensure that mothers and their babies were healthy.

"We provide parents with an informed choice. It is up to them on what method of birth control to practice," she added.

Ebon stressed that contrary to Church pronouncements, the Lagtas Buntis Program was pro-life and anti-abortion.

Church opposition

Bacolod Bishop Vicente Navarro said the Church was against the government's policies on population control through the use of contraceptives.

"These measures are highly unethical because they defeat the purpose of man shaped by God, which is both unitive and procreative, and therefore is a violation, which we take to all churches in the Sacred Universe on Families.

He pointed out that the issue was not to regulate the reproduction but the elimination.

"The way some have to have more than four or more people because powers, either local government and policies in," Navarro said.

The Church has denounced particularly the Lagtas Buntis Program of the Department of Health, claiming that it encourages abortion and says we are living birth control methods that are against Church policies.

Pacquiao attacked and called a quitter

PAINFUL: Pacquiao works out before the press conference for his Sunday (Manila time) fight against Erik Morales in Las Vegas. AP

By Recah Trinidad

LAS VEGAS—After being threatened by a virus, Manny Pacquiao was attacked and called a quitter in public yesterday three days before his monumental showdown with Mexican boxing icon Erik Morales, who praised his Filipino opponent as a powerful and dangerous fighter.

There was word from Pacquiao's camp that a mid-hunger cut—shivery and obviously going down with the flu—has been swallowed, bout shoring for the Filipino boxing superstar, who should've shielded from all forms of buzz and hassle in the run-up to the biggest fight of his career.

However, Pacquiao and his people have, including a gang of Filipinos from Los Angeles, could only barest sneakily as Morales' managers, Fernando Beltran, bumped verbal abuse on the Filipino boxing hero in an HBO press conference at the Studio 54 of the MGM Grand, venue of Saturday's boxing showdown being hyped as "Coming-to-with Everything."

Morales 'belittled'

Beltran worked it to front Pacquiao which he claimed had belittled Morales by bragging "they're gonna take out Morales in one round, take out Morales in two rounds, 5 rounds, whatever."

Beltran, livid to a fight grim rose, asked "Everyone of you here, tell me, who has taken Morales out in 49 fights?"

"Maybe [no one]!" observed the Morales man in the conference hall.

"So, I would like to say to all of you: If someone is looking to spit a fight, it's Manny Pacquiao, not Erik Morales," Beltran said.

Pacquiao, brighter of face after shoring off the body board he wore when he climbed in here Monday, stared blankly as Beltran belted away.

"Pacquiao," continued the Morales manager, "man, he was hit with a body punch, he went down the canvas, he didn't want to continue fighting; second one, he was not in a same fight, he stopped and wanted to end the fight."

Beltran blasted out, "Erik Morales has been on, Erik Morales has been beat, Erik Morales will never back up, he will never say that's the end, he will always fight one more round, two more rounds, whatever it takes to win a fight."

$100,000 bet

For the disrespect Team Pacquiao had supposedly close to Morales, Beltran dangled a $100,000 bet.

"Or put your money to your mouth," said he and the game people. Only closed his mouth and walked down the stage to a big applause.

Nobody at Team Pacquiao, led by promoter Murad Muhammad, who together with trainer Freddie Roach had the expert the Mexican side with their taunts, called the big bet.

The colorful and well-attended press conference promises to be a fitting lead-off to the March 19 event (Sunday morning in Manila) which, according to promoter Bob Arum, "is not a big fight, but a great event."

The tale of the tape showed Morales at 5 feet 6, a good two inches taller than Pacquiao, even though they appeared almost equal in height and in build as they stood face to face for photographers at the end of the media session.

Arum said the card should be a sure sellout, with only 2,000 of the 14,796 seats at the MGM Grand Garden waiting to be snatched.

Pacquiao spoke in straight English to the delight of the crowd. He asked fans not to miss the event because, he said, it will surely be a memorable one.

Morales acknowledged Pacquiao's speed and awesome form, calling the Filipino superstar a dangerous foe.

Lessening walks

Pacquiao, expected to breeze through the weigh-in, wound up his regular drills yesterday but will do some lessening walks until Friday.

It's an open secret Morales has been struggling to keep his weight down, although he no longer appeared frail and gaunt yesterday unlike when he doubled in from the cold following a long flight from Mexico City to the dry-the-office day.

Morales, who reportedly completed 300 rounds of sparring in the mountains, compared to the 161 done by Pacquiao in LA, will continue to work out behind closed doors at the Top Rank gym here.

For the third straight night, Pacquiao and his close aides prayed the Holy Rosary in his suite.

Mayor Bobo Aduaen of General Santos City, who joined the prayer group, said the he hopes now the sick device who had threatened to contaminate the boxing hero among Pacquiao's hangers-on.

"Lahugnitin si Morales sa suntok ni Pacquiao. Ambot ng 5th ang ligtas nya) I (Morales) will be forceful) when he starts receiving Pacquiao's punches. His body preparation will reach [sic]," one of the wives or relatives, who is also a Makati cop.

Bobo G. Lagumbay, Contributor

Gabi named GAB Boxer of the Month

KUALA NAWA salesed southpaw Gerardo "Prince" Gabi has been chosen by the Games and Amusements Board as its Boxer of the Month for February following his impressive performance over no-luck-for-last Eric Lo in Davao City.

GAB boxing division chief Emmanuel Rivera, through member Tony Cuenca of the ratings committee, announced Gabi's selection, which was approved by GAB chair Eric Buhain.

The WBC No. 8 flyweight Lolo was cited for his first-round destruction of Jimmy Pitoniman of Indonesia in a scheduled 10-rounder.

Pitoniman and Gabi had battled to a draw in Jakarta in 2002. Salvio L. Lagumbay, Contributor

RP's Fuentes draws Thai; Salim loses

LAMAY Filipino bantamweight Roman Fuentes of the Gen2 camp went home via unanimous decision by Pan-Asian Boxing Association Eastern champ Pannarong Kiatlapphayuto in view 12-rounder from last Tuesday at the Withop district in Petchaburi, Thailand.

The PBA No. 1 and mandatory challenger Pannarong prevailed in every fallen via scores of 120-118, 119-118, 119-118.

The loss cost Salim's record slip to 8-3, 2 KOs, while Pannarong remains undefeated with 13-0, 13 KOs.

In the chief support, ALA Boy Bucky Fuentino figured in a 6-round draw with WBA No. 3 strawweight Chanoi Por Pooch. Salvio L. Lagumbay, Contributor

3 local referees expect Manny to clobber Erik

THREE of the country's best referees, who first marked Manny Pacquiao's previous fights, yesterday picked the Filipino ring to beat Erik Morales again.

Sonny Caldwell's Bruce McNeil Jr., is director of Angeles City and the third man in the ring when Pacquiao defended his IBF super bantamweight crown against Fahprakorb Rakkiatgym of Thailand in 2002, says Pacquiao will win by knockout.

"Mas pasa [my heart] ko kung si Manny," McNeil said, while also mentioning the Filipino hero of a possible Morales rematch.

"Everyone of you here, tell me, who has taken Morales out in 49 fights?"

"Maybe [no one]!" observed the Morales manager in the conference hall.

"So, I would like to say to all of you: If someone is looking to spit a fight, it's Manny Pacquiao, not Erik Morales," Beltran said.

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rain on points as the fight will be held in the Mexican's acknowledged current) home town.

Ferdinand Estrella, who marked Pacquiao's last non-title fight against Palmas Del Mar boxer, said Morales' has been involved in more rougher fights, so he's body weight can't be able to handle Pacquiao's attack."

Silvestre Abalora, who worked Pacquiao's bout against Fahlbusan Sealtegym also for the 2nd time, says Pacquiao's power punches.

Mental baggage for Morales

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendiola

I WENT to many places this week. And from many people I met, I got the same question: What is your prediction, Pacquiao or Morales?

And they all got the same answer: Pacquiao. Why Pacquiao?

And I said, "Because he is simply the stronger puncher than Morales."

Among others, I told that to two town mayors early last Tuesday and Wednesday (March 15 and March 16, respectively)... Mayor Pantaleon Q. Serrano of Mabalacat, Pampanga, and Mayor Jolly Bautista of San Carlos City, Pangasinan.

I almost told that also to Prof. Nick Mabuchi, a long lost relative from Dagupan City. And to lawyer Boy Solis, the long time senator of Sen Guingona.

But they were too busy doing business in the provincial capital of Pangasinan that we never talked seriously about boxing.

"Eh, my senator, Nino," said Boy Solis to me. "Do dream! Sa pot of gold in Cagayan de Oro City, where he owns Boo Hoo Hotel."

Boy and Nino both had dream fedlines. Pangasinan, that seaside paradise not far from the Hundred Islands of Alaminos, Pangasinan.

Incidentally, Attorney Solis and Professor Nick M are the main stars of tomorrow Agrarian of Pangasinan in the project to make city home province a model of solid waste management.

Ok, yes, also Dr. Cecilio Tiong, the vice-chairperson office of Mayor Bonifacio Lim Nick and Boy, the Doc and Sine Cecilio City administrator Rudy Mandapat are also pushing for Lingayen to adopt a clean and green program based on managing the city's solid wastes, beginning at the public market.

"I am all out in this project to make the city clean similar as solid waste management is concerned," said Mayor Bonifacio, whose mom son, the good looking boys, is the vice mayor.

Surprised that I'm suddenly talking about solid waste management?

If you haven't known about it yet, well, I've become a solid waste management convert. Mine, though, has gone one step further: I'm also now even campaigning, a necessary component of solid waste management.

Hey, Mayor Dominic and Attorney Ely), look what you've done.

Even thanks king Bob Dy) has also embraced the beauty of your dreams. Organic farming through vermi-composting. So with Julius Agustin, the Lingayan chief of my hometown; he also now wants to go into it.

But last I sang further from today's topic, which is boxing, let's leave it at that—for now.

"What would be the main key to a Pacquiao victory?" asked Sorsog Julius, a boxing buff for nearly 40 years now.

"His punishing power," I said. "In his last eight fights, Pacquiao scored seven knockouts. The only survivor was Juan Manuel Marquez, who lasted three knockdowns at the first bout but they're talking a controversial split draw."

"But Morales is also a knockout artist," Sorsog Julius said. "The most knockouts."

He is right. Morales is 47-2, with 30 KOs.

But then, Morales' only two defeats—six points. And been inflicted by Mexico Antonio Barrera. And you will note that Barrera was knocked out in the 11th round by Pacquiao in November 2003.

Psychologically, therefore, Pacquiao has a big edge. His 102 victory over Barrera will surely be a mental baggage for Morales on fight day Sunday, March 20.

"OK, then, let's go for Pacquiao, not because he is our countryman but because he has the better credentials than Morales," said Sorsog Julius, whose youngest son, Alexis, was named after the boxing legend, Alexis Argüello.

If Morales could not fall within the rounds, Pacquiao could be in trouble.

***

BIRTHDAY. Incidentally, Alvin Aguasol will graduate on Sunday at the University of Baguio, the great institution in the Pines City named by the family of Don and Aurora Gaerlan. My salute to you, classmate!... Bob Galael, the former PBA Commissioner who was the founding secretary general of the World Boxing Council when he was only 24 years old, will return to Angeles City on Sunday to watch the Pacquiao-Morales fight at the residence of former Angeles City Mayor Nel Pamintuan Datuig. Bob said to me yesterday: "Thank you, pare, for writing about the pay-per-view in Pampanga. I am not flying to Las Vegas anymore and instead, I'll watch the fight in Pampanga. But I still be represented there by my son, Chito." The revolutionary pay-per-view athletic, a fan in the country can be had for only P200, through Dennis Anthony Uy's ACCTS. Chapter 67. Call 081-5251125 or 668-9928888 for more details.

Pol bodyguards rob couple in Biliran

By Rolando G. Borringa
PDI Visayas Bureau

NAVAL, Biliran—A band of seven men, mostly identified as bodyguards of the ruling Lapiran political family and wielding government issued firearms, broke into an apartment rented by a Vietnamese businessman in the commercial district here on Monday and ran away with P600,000 and US$600 in cash, mobile phones and valuables.

Gov. Rogelio Espina said he regretted that the suspects belonged to his clan and made a farce of his community rehabilitation efforts for reformed penal offenders.

Police solved the robbery several hours after it took place because some of the suspects were easily identified because they were not wearing masks. They were captured in three hideouts in different towns.

Some P175,000 of the stolen cash from the apartment were recovered, as well as the guns used in the robbery.

Arrested were Eugenio Nieva Gerpia, a native of Biliran town; Reigie Delgado Arial, Marvin Carlos Ramirez and Alexander Arial, all of Isabel; Bienvenido Agcaoili, Caibiran, and Elgin Bocave, Enrico Severino and Joseph Jerimiah Prad, all of Villa Viamco, Caibiran.

Espina said Nieva and Severino were reportedly in the government payroll as provincial jail guards. They have been released on parole from the detained prisoners in Montebello, Metro Manila.

Some of the seized firearms and getaway motorcycles belong to the provincial government, a police officer, who requested anonymity, said. This was not mentioned in the police report, however.

The report said the victims, Casey Luong and his Filipino wife Lily Rebueno Luong, had just arrived in the apartment at around 7 p.m. from their duty as medical representatives of pharmaceutical companies in nearby Naval when the robbers barged in.

2 more leftist activists killed

LUCENA CITY—Two members of leftist organizations in Camarines Norte were shot and killed separately, according to Anakpawis party-list Rep. Rafael Mariano, who pointed at Army soldiers as suspects.

Mariano said one of the victims, Joel Reyes, a tricycle driver and Anakpawis organizer in Jose Panganiban town was shot at about 11 a.m. on Wednesday, allegedly by members of the 202nd Infantry Brigade and 31st Infantry Battalion.

Maj. Jose Mesa, spokesperson of the military's Southern Luzon Command based in Camp Nakar here, strongly denied the accusations.

"That perennial accusation is totally unfair to the military. If they really have a case against any member of the military, they should just file their case in court instead of always resorting to 'trial by media publicity,'" Mesa said.

Quoting reports reaching him, Mariano said two gunmen boarded Reyes' tricycle at the public market in the sugar South Poblacion and at the boundaries of Barangays Calibra and Nakalaya, one of the passengers shot Reyes.

Mariano also reported that Ernesto Bang, public information officer of the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas chapter in Camarines Norte, was also dead as about 10 p.m. of March 10 on the doorsteps of his house in Barangay Malaguhan Bunsl in Labo town.

Mariano, the youngest 10th national elect, said four were shot the victims in the month when he opened the door to find out who was knocking. Delfin Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

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Roundup

'Grass' uprooted

CAMP NAKAR, QUEZON—Members of the Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency (PDEA) and the Army's 79th Infantry Battalion uprooted 6,500 fully-grown and 1,000 seedlings of marijuana plants during a raid on the remote village of Barangay Tanguisan, South Quezon on Monday, Sr. Insp. Valentino Reta, officer in charge of PDEA Central Mindanao, said reporters that two marijuana planters identified as Wenjelyn Lanuayan and Noel Buenida escaped before the raiding team arrived in the area. "Maybe, they were able to spot us as they had immediately," Reta said. After uprooting, the members of the raiding team burned the prohibited plant. They brought a few kilos to be used as exhibit.

Agustin Zarsadias, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Tornado ruins crops

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—About P1.3 million worth of crops and properties were damaged when a tornado hit the outskirt village of San Jose here at around 5 p.m. March 13. No casualty was reported but 30 nipapa trees and four houses were uprooted by the twister. San Jose village chairman Antonio Cuizon and Barangay Kagawad Conrado Lontayao and Barangay Tanod Ernesto Pacaldo Lontayao and Barangay Tanod Ernesto Pacaldo Lontayao and Barangay Tanod Ernesto Pacaldo

CLOSE-UP of the fine jail guard, Edgar Diaza, killed by the escaping prisoners early last Monday. He had reportedly planned to retire early.

WAKE for fallen jail guards Edgar Diaza and Amadeo Salapare (inset) at the Camp Bagong Diwa chapel.

DIALOGUE with the Muslim community in Barangay Pasong, Quezon City, is conducted by NCRFO chief Gen. Avelino Razon following the killings of Muslim prisoners at Camp Bagong Diwa.

DOJ bares Abu Sayyaf's Holy Week plot

Private people B-1

Manila, 35, she said that to Abu Sayyaf leader still at large, Hashim Jamiliani, claimed to speak directly with al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden via satellite phone. It was unclear whether this was a boast by Jamiliani to impress his men.

Jamiliani was one of three suspects "captured" and charged last month for bomb attacks that killed eight people and wounded more than 100 on Feb. 14 in the cities of Makati, Davao and General Santos. The Abu Sayyaf said it launched the attacks in retaliation for military operations in Sulu province which is Muslim.

Although the militants' ranks have been largely depleted by US-backed military assaults, the government still considers the group a major threat.

Such a scenario was highlighted by a botched jailbreak on Monday in which Abu Sayyaf suspects seized guards' weapons in a melee that left five people dead. As many as 29 more manhunt ended when police stormed the prison in a hail of gunfire on Tuesday and killed 22 inmates, including three prominent Abu Sayyaf commanders.

Apparently not wanting to give up more ransoms than Sunday's police assault on Camp Bagong Diwa, President Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday prodded the people not to dwell on the violent incident.

"Let us move on," she told reporters in Zamboanga. "Magpa-patuloy." "Let us pass that behind us. Let us . . . concentrate on jobs, the economy. That is why I am here."

Since Wednesday, Mr. Arroyo has been out of town, visiting Zamboanga del Sur on Mindanao and Zamboanga City yesterday. She is expected to be in Basilan today.

In Manila, Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said it was now "more important" for the government to "return to our economic and fiscal agenda."

"There is no more reason to follow the leads of the Abu Sayyaf and its sanctuaries based in Mindanao.

He underscored the need for government to focus on attaining fiscal stability, attracting more investments and generating jobs.

Converts

Medialdia said the "graduates" were mostly Christians who had converted to Islam and were sometimes called "balik-Islam." They were reportedly trained in coastal Mindanao, to where the Abu Sayyaf had moved recently.

"Recruiting and converting to Islam a Christian is the easiest way to penetrate the western ways for the largely Christian population," said Medialdia.

He said the new recruits would serve as effective "bagger" because they could blend in with the people in the largely Christian areas in Metro Manila.

In addition, many converts have proven themselves "more zealous" in their new-found faith, according to the prosecutor.

He cited the case of Angelo Trinidad, a Christian who had confessed to the Manor bombing, and a Redando Dilosa, suspect in the Superferry bombing and the Dos Palmas kidnapping.

Sit in the middle

Medialdia said a person known's culpable about the Abu Sayyaf's operations advised him to be careful when going to (Catholic) churches next week.

"If you go to church, don't sit on the first pews or in the side of the pews. Better sit in the middle," he said.

He said the information was relayed to him in the form of an "advice."

"I don't want to be alarmist, but people should be alerted," he said. But he also advised the public to not to panic.

Medialdia has been a regional prosecutor in Zamboanga City before he was assigned to handle the cases of Abu Sayyaf members in Manila.

He said he had handled cases involving members of the group for about nine years now.

Medialdia, 58, had to relocate his family to Manila for security reasons.

Asked why he seemed to have made a long and deep study of the Abu Sayyaf, he replied: "We have to understand the way they think."

Key gov't installations

Another DOJ prosecutor said the department had also received reports that the Abu Sayyaf also planned to bomb the DOJ building on Padre Faura, Manila, and other key government installations.

"They will try to get to and place the bomb and if they failed to do so, they will try to crash the gates with bombs in their vehicles," he said, although he dismissed the information as far-fetched.

Still, he said DOJ officials were not taking the report lightly and had beefed up security at the DOJ compound.

Partly assembled bomb

Police yesterday removed a partly assembled bomb found in a upper floor of a high-rise building in Ortigas City, an official said.

Director Avelino Razon, head of the National Capital Region Police Office, could not say whether the discovery of the device in the Ortigas business district was tied to a bombing threat by the Abu Sayyaf.

Police Chief Supt. Nicanor Bartolome said the bomb was found in a 15th floor toilet that contained "a crystalline substance, a watch and some wires. There were no blinking caps or timing device," he said.

"The IED (improvised explosive device) was not equipped with it," he said over local radio. "Maybe it was just put there to frighten us."

Scuba training in Palawan

During questioning, Bahnarin said the Abu Sayyaf leaders received their Islamic training in Pakistan, the report said. He generically received cell phone messages from Jamiliani and Indanan "telling him how many bahoras he would be able to draw," the report said.

Satellite phone

His training was in preparation for a Jemaah Islamiyah bombing plot on unspecified targets outside the Philippines that would require "underwater operations," the report quoted him as saying.

Bahnarin also disclosed that Jamiliani was also, contrary to speculation he had been killed in a military air strike, and said that the Abu Sayyaf chieftain claimed he communicated with Bin Laden by satellite phone, the report said.

That could represent a boost by Jamiliani to improve his men, and his standing with Bin Laden, as reconciliation of insurgents said they were unable to verify it.

The interrogation report said: "Subject asserted that Jamiliani has a direct contact to Osama bin Laden and Dulo Lackaw, brother-in-law Mohammad Ismael Khalifa. Jamiliani is using a satellite phone to contacting both leaders. Subject further asserted that Bin Laden would ... talk to no one except Jamiliani. They conversed in Arabic."

He told interrogators that he and another militant, Abdil Shukul, were ordered by Indanan to launch a war in Manila last month to divert the military's attention away from an offensive against rebels in Sulu.

During a court hearing, a bus conductor identified Bahnarin and Tibdalen as passengers who tried briefly left the bus shortly before the blast.

Both suspects pleaded innocent. (with reports from AP and AFP)

AFP: How can kidnappers be martyrs?

Private people B-1

civilians, who killed and raped hostages?" Pastrol said, referring to Abu Sayyaf leaders Albanian Hamsad Limbong (Commander Kumoy), Ghalib Andang (Commander Robot) and Hadrul Sahidulla (Commander Global).

But the head of a Moro Christian people's alliance (MCPA) unequivocally denied, said that among the "innocent casualties" were 70-year-old Ahmad Ilyas Abo, oldest detainee who had Alzheimer's disease), Bandanon Agnat, Ahmad Ammangas, Ibrahim Jaw Jaw, Gaffar Hundi and Hashim Abdulhamid.

"Out of the more than 400 inmates, only 10 were identified as Abu Sayyaf hostage-takers. The 22 who were killed were more than half of the identified Abu Sayyaf participants in the crisis," Lidasan said.

Speaking to the lawyers from Mindanao, Lidasan said: "The operation need not open bullets hailstorm(ed) at the inmates for this wall surely hit innocent inmates and by this Sayyaf lawyers(') hostage claim(s) their hostage-taking."

Compelling evidence lack

The MCPA statement that many of the almost 130 detainees listed as members of the Abu Sayyaf at the Bicutan jail were arrested for the 2003 crackdown on suspected terrorists in Basilan.

6 Abus survive jail assault

By Luige A. del Puerto

AT LEAST six Abu Sayyaf members, who might have taken part in the jailbreak attempt, survived the police assault that killed 22 detainees on Tuesday, a police police official said yesterday.

"At least six men were mentioned as part of the jailbreak attempt. They're alive," the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The official said fellow detainees had told investigators that the six Abu Sayyaf members helped disarm guards during the routine head count on Monday. (The escape try failed, leaving the Abu Sayyaf men in order control of the four-story jail that also housed a total of 469 inmates.)

Lidasan said the MCPA and the human rights group Karapatan had been working for their release due to the lack of compelling evidence against them.

Both groups have been working for the release of what so-called Bandan 71, including the six identified by Lidasan as "innocent casualties," members of Bandan who were among those rounded up on suspicion that they were members of the bandit group.

She condemned Kumoy, Robot and Global for meeting the Bicutan crisis. "The jail has always been peaceful until Kumoy arrived there," Lidasan said.

Hatred

Lidasan did not spare Interior Secretary Angelo Reyes, who she said may have stoked the flames of hatred among the Moro people because he ordered the assault on Camp Bagong Diwa.

Lidasan said Reyes brought back to mind his role in the aftermath of the Mapandi siege in 2000, the military crackdown in 2001 and the Pilot bombing in 2002 that forced thousands of families to evacuate their homes.

Reyes has maintained that all means for a peaceful solution to the standoff had been exhausted before government forces stormed the building where the Abu Sayyaf members were holed up.

"The troops were under instruction to open fire when they didn't offer any resistance," Reyes said.

Correct handling

He urged the public to appreciate the efforts of the policemen, who risked their lives in striking the prison from the Abu Sayyaf detainees.

Senator Jinggoy Ejercito Estrada, head of the investigating team, neither condemned nor denied the possibility that men involved in the jailbreak attempt were alive.

"We are looking into every detail," the chief of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group-National Capital Region said.

Lacson promised an investigation so thorough it would be like "writing a book."

"We will look into every thing," he told the lawyers.

Investigators would even try to know the trajectory of the bullets fired by both the assault troops and the Abu Sayyaf men.

Bal Rep. Mujib Susukan, who accompanied with the lawmen together with Gov. Parnak Hataman of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, yesterday called for an independent inquiry.

"To investigate is the job of the police. But since they were part of the assault, there should be an independent inquiry," Hataman said.

Susukan mentioned "Chit" Estrada-one already calling for one, he disclosed.

"Justice must be dispelled. There are many who believed it was a massacre. I've received reports that (Commander) Robot did not fight. They just surrendered peacefully," Governor Hataman was talking to Global, who said he would not get one because the rifle was published. Global had insisted he had no part in it," Hataman said.

"All these must be answered by an independent inquiry," he added.

In the House of Representatives, legislators rejected the notion that the members of the Abu Sayyaf, who died during the police assault, were summarily executed.

Rep. Aurelio Albano (Kampi, Iglobal) and House Majority Leader Prospero Nograles said it was wrong to paint the successful police action against the Abu Sayyaf members as a "massacre."

Albano believed that what actually happened was a violent confrontation with armed and dangerous inmates, who had been out killed inmates and policemen during their bloody takeover of the Camp Bagong Diwa prison in Taguig.

Nograles said the government was correct in handling the situation.

The two lawmakers said critics of the police, including Bayan Muna party-list Rep. Joel Virador, should remember that the Abu Sayyaf "criminals" were given ample time to surrender.

Virador had called for an inquiry into the assault, saying the Abu Sayyaf leaders were "more useful alive than dead as they hold strategic information on the workings of their organizations."

Alarmed

Military officials were "very alarmed" that ordinary Muslims organized the men as martyrs.

"This is the distorted interpretation [of the Koran that is taught] by the Tabligh," Pastrol said.

The Tablighi is a religious cult made prominent in the Middle East who are suspected of teaching radical Islam.

Linked to the "terrorist" al Qaida organization, these preachers had "infiltrated" the true Islam in the Koran, according to Pastrol.

"It's an eye-opener to moderate Muslims that the teachings of the Tabligh, of the Jemaah Islamiyah, are more recognized by common Muslims and not only by the rebels," he said. "It's very alarming."

Correct wrong leadership

He said Muslim clerics or the "ulamas" have to step in "to address this wrong teaching of the Koran. They have to correct the wrong teachings." (With reports from Michael Lim Ubac)

Las Vegas odds favoring Pinoy sensation zoom up

Private people B-1

manoeuvred a plus-115 underdog, meaning a $100 bet on the Mexican fighter would win $115.

He was only a plus-210 underdog the other day.

This development angered many Filipino fans of Barquias, who had looked forward to a fan-

ter duel before putting money on their idol.

Big favorite

Numerous Pinoy fans hit the jackpot in 2003 when Barquias was rated a 2-1 underdog against Marco Antonio Barrera, whom he proceeded to stand and stop in the 11th round.

Barquias was also a big favorite when he fought Juan Manuel Marquez here but lost in a fight that ended in a draw.

Betors here generally feel Barquias would win over Morales by virtue of his conquest of Barrera in 2003.

Ezekiel Hussein, who once floored Barquias, feels it will be the Filipino by stoppage—but Hussein might win if the fight lasts the distance.

True logic

It may not be so, as explained in the website dogbooksbetting.com which said "true logic says Barquias's victory over Barrera doesn't automatically win Morales."

Continuing, the same website: "Logic may say that because Barquias handled Barrera so easily and Morales lost to Barrera twice, then Barquias will do the same to Morales."

It's doubtful this thing will happen, warned the analysts. "Local perception differs from persons on paper, and in boxing so many times, logic has so many illogical outcomes."

The odds prevailing in the Barquias-Morales fight could be one of those inexplicable over-turns.

Injured O'Neal could be out for the season

INDIANAPOLIS (Sports Network) — Indiana Pacers All-Star forward Jermaine O'Neal will be sidelined indefinitely and could possibly miss the rest of the season as he continues to be plagued by a recurring right shoulder.

O'Neal sustained the injury in a March 5 loss to the Nuggets when he was hit on the right arm by Denver's Prematcus Elson while driving to the basket.

He was placed on the injured list the next day and has missed the last five games. O'Neal is eligible to be activated for Wednesday's game against Utah, but head coach Rick Carlisle does not expect his star player to return to the lineup anytime soon.

"He's going to be out for awhile," Carlisle said. "I have no idea when, or if, he will return. His situation continues to be monitored and, as the swelling goes down, we'll be able to make a better determination as to exactly where he is. "There has not been any decision made on whether O'Neal will require surgery to repair the shoulder, but if he does need an operation then his season would likely be over.

O'NEAL

The 26-year-old O'Neal, who made the All-Star Game as a reserve this season, is the Pacers' leading scorer, rebounder and shot blocker. He is averaging 24.8 points to go along with 9.0 rebounds and 3.1 blocks per outing.

O'Neal has already missed nine games this season (21) due to the previous four years combined (20), due mostly to the 31 contests he missed while serving a league suspension for his part in the mid-November brawl at Detroit.

The Pacers are 34-19 with O'Neal in the lineup and 9-12 without him this year.

"We've got to find a way to get on the plane, and that's going to be a challenge in itself," Carlisle said. "We've got to go on the idea that he's not going to be here. That's the way we have to approach it. We can't be hanging our hopes on his return because it's going to be unlikely if he comes back at all. We've got to do it with the guys we have available."

Reuters

AGASSI tries hard to wipe the tears during his match against Guillermo Coria at Argentina.

Federer, Agassi march to ATP Masters q'finals

INDIAN WELLS, California (World No. 1 Roger Federer held off a stiff challenge from Ivan Ljubicic in advance to the quarter-finals at the $4.6-million Indian Wells ATM and ATP Masters Series event.

Top-seed Federer won 7-6 (7/3), 7-6 (7/4) on Wednesday and has not dropped a set so far in the $4.6-million hard-court tournament.

Federer already has three titles (Doha, Rotterdam, Dubai) in 2005, with seven over Ljubicic to all-time finals. He has won six of seven tournaments he has entered since the onset of the US Open.

Federer's victory set up a marquee quarter-final at the California desert event featuring six players ranked in the top ten.

Second-seed Lleyton Hewitt, third-seed Andy Roddick and No. 6 Tim Henman also won their fourth round matches on Wednesday.

Ljubicic, who had not dropped a set in the event heading into the Federer match, still leads the ATP Tour with 29 wins in the year compared to 28 for Federer.

Federer produced 38 winners and 13 unforced errors, while Ljubicic had 28 winners and 14 unforced errors in the one hour, 46 minute senior court match.

Federer won 89 percent (32/36) of his first serves and 69 of 109 overplayers.

Federer stepped it up when it counted the most at the big points in the tiebreakers.

There was just one break point chance in the match in the second game of the second set with Ljubicic serving and down 30-40. Federer missed the return to get to deuce and then Ljubicic shaved out the game with his ace to make it 1-1.

Federer will next face Germany's Nicolas Kiefer, who upset 10th seed David Nalbandian 6-1, 6-3.

In the women's draw, fourth seed Elena Dementieva reached the semis of the WTA/ATP Masters Series event with a come-from-behind victory over Svetlana Kuznetsova to set all-Russian semifinal for 2004 US Open final.

The 23-year-old Dementieva won 3-6, 6-3, 7-5. Up for third consecutive time.

"It was a great match. Both of us were playing well, but I played much better than I did in the US Open," said Dementieva of Moscow.

Dementieva, the only woman to reach two Grand Slam singles finals in 2004, is going through a transitional period with her game, striving to improve on a subpar server that has been her undoing on big points in the past.

10 Open champion Kuznetsova double-faulted in the final game to give Dementieva three match points.

Kuznetsova, the fifth seed, staved off three match points to get to deuce then survived a fourth match point before double-faulting on the fifth one to hand Dementieva the victory.

Dementieva has been the more consistent server over after losing to her 6-3, 7-5 in the US Open final.

Dementieva advances to the semis, where she will meet either American Lindsay Davenport or Nathalie Dechy of France.

Kim Clijsters bounced her opponent in the other semifinal by smothering some net play in beating Spain's Conchita Martinez 6-1, 3-6, 6-2. She will play either Nicole Vaidisova or Mary Pierce.

Eight time major winner Andre Agassi was assertive in beating Guillermo Coria 6-4, 6-1, ousting the Argentinian clay-court specialist for the second consecutive year.

Agassi beat Coria in straight sets in the quarter-finals here last year.

Australian second seed Hewitt journeyed Paul-Henri Mathieu of France, 6-1, 7-6(4), to remain on track for his third Indian Wells title and former US Open winner Roddick of the United States bested Spain's Carlos Fernando Gonzalez 6-4, 6-3 to reach the quarterfinals.

In another fourth round match, Englishman Henman survived the distraction over Spaniard Tommy Robredo with a 6-4, 2-6, 6-3 win. Henman is now 4-0 against Robredo. *AFP*

SONICS' Antonis Daniels (right) drives to the basket against Pacers' Carlos Arroyo in the first half Wednesday in Auburn Hi

Shaq, Kobe downplay 2nd mee

SEATTLE — Here's a scene for: Shaquille O'Neal and Kobe Bryant actually agree on something.

Asked at different times, in different ways and in different cities, the former teammates offered exactly the same assessment of Thursday's NBA contest between the Los Angeles Lakers and the Miami Heat — the second time they will meet in opposite this season.

"It's just another game," O'Neal said.

And from Bryant: "It's just another game."

On a simplistic level, they're right. The result of the game in Miami will matter in the standings as much as any other game.

His whatever thing and Kobe Bryant all, there's sure to be some intrigue than that which surrounds typical regular-season match-ups of teams from different conferences.

Whether Feb 16) has won 13 straight games, should climb the Southwest Division championship in the next week, and appears locked into the top seed

Aussies make NCAA cage mark

ST LOUIS, Missouri — Two Australian players will compete in the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) men's basketball tournament this begins Thursday and leads to a Final Four showdown here next month.

A total of 301 players from outside the United States, an average of more than one for each school, played this season for 326 colleges, all of them seeking a berth in the tournament, the annual American passion dubbed "March Madness."

Aussie legend Andrew Gaze was the first notable US college star from Down Under, speaking Seton Hall into the 1989 NCAA Finals.

This year, 30 players, twice as many as a decade ago, played for 130 schools. Only Canada and Lithuania produced more.

Georgia Tech senior 7-foot-1 center Luke Schenscher averages 10.4 points and 7.3 rebounds a game for the Yellow Jackets, his fifth and final year having only 19-11 this season.

Andrew Bogut, a 7-footer seen as a potential top 10 pick in Australia National Basketball Association draft, will lead the University of Utah, 27-3, against Texas-El Paso, 27-7, on Thursday at Tucson, Arizona.

Aussie Daniel Gabriel had 11.6 points and 6.7 rebounds a game to help spark St. Mary's, 22-6, reach a first-round game against Southern Illinois, 20-7.

Alex Loughton averaged 13.8 points and 8.1 rebounds for Old Dominion University, which went 20-3 and opens against former Michigan State, 20-6, in West Lafayette, Massachusetts.

Former Clarke Cameron contributed 7.8 points a game for Louisiana-Lafayette, 20-10, which opens Friday in Nashville against Louisville, 20-6.

Overall, a 21-7 club with Aussie Simone Blumis for earning off the bench with 5.1 points a game, opens Friday against North Carolina State of Wisconsin. *AFP*

Sharapova turns back Zuluaga

SHARAPOVA: Big hands on them.

INDIAN WELLS, California — Wimbledon champion Maria Sharapova had to call upon all her reserves to beat Colombia's Fabiola Zuluaga 4-6, 6-2, 7-5 in the fourth round of the Pacific Life Open on Thursday.

The world number three appeared to be cruising when 5-2 up in the third set, before the unseen Zuluaga found Sharapova into tentative errors, forcing her to use three match points to seize the nearly two hour contest.

"It was a big battle out there," said Sharapova, who will meet the winner of the Mary Pierce-Nadia Petrova match.

"I basically committed suicide when I had those four match points, especially when I came into the net and missed at the middle.

"When you're not playing your best tennis, those are the matches where you finish, win or lose.

"But it's great to get through there, because I feel whenever I don't play that well, that the next day I come out and I do better and better," Sharapova said the 3rd world finalist added to her season final loss to Serena Williams at the Australian Open, where she acquainted three match points.

Two other Russians, Elena Dementieva and Svetlana Kuznetsova, are up a set apiece of their 2004 US Open final when Dementieva beat Tatiana Golovin 2-6, 6-4, 6-4, while fifth seed Kuznetsova overcame Ai Sugiyama of Japan 6-3, 6-2.

Former champion Kim Clijsters continued her comeback from a wrist injury with a 6-2, 6-1 thrashing of Russia's Evgenia Linetskaya. Clijsters said she had worked on her forehand and also decided to become more aggressive. *Reuters*

WORLD FIGURE SKATING

Russians retain crown as Chinese pull out

MOSCOW — Russia's Tatiana Totmianina and Maxim Marinin retained their pairs title in dramatic fashion at the world figure skating championships on Wednesday after former winners Zhao Hongbo and Hongbo Zhao withdrew at the last minute.

Totmianina and Marinin skated an impressive free program to the music from Tomoki Kawahara's ballet Rodeo made to win by more than 16 points over fellow Russians Maria Petrova and Alexei Tikhonov.

The Chinese duo, world champions in 2003 and 2004, pulled out of the competition just before they skated to share an Zhao was suffering from a knee injury.

In their absence, Qing Shang and Hao Zhang — China's number two — took the bronze with their compatriots, Qing Pang and Jian Tong, finishing fourth.

There was also a big controversy earlier when Hao collided with Totmianina during Wednesday's morning practice.

"I was standing still with my back to the Chinese guy when suddenly I was thrown 100 degrees to the side and fell to the ice," said Totmianina, who was sidelined for almost three months earlier the season after falling head first during a lift in the Skate America competition.

With the fall last October leaving the Russian uncertain for several minutes, Wednesday's incident left Totmianina shaken.

"I don't know if it's coincidence was premeditated, I hope not, but I must say where that the ice it was very painful. It was not a pleasant feeling."

Hao said the collision was an accident.

"It was unintentional, just an accident and I already sent my apologies to Tatiana," the 23-year-old said through the interpreter.

Totmianina's coach, Olga Markina, however, saw things differently.

"I can't say for sure that they did it on purpose but the Chinese pair were very aggressive throughout the practice skate," the 1984 Olympic pairs champion told Reuters.

Meanwhile, Petrova and Tikhonov, two-time champions in 2000, were delighted with their performance.

"We had some technical mistakes in our free program but overall, I think, it was our best skate ever," said 24-year-old Tikhonov.

TATIANA Totmianina and Maxim Marinin perform during the Pairs Free Skating Program of the 2005 World Figure Skating Championships.

ks trample Cavs; Pistons win

MILWAUKEE—Michael Redd scored 32 points and Joe Smith tied his season high with 21 as the Milwaukee Bucks withstood 34 points from LeBron James and defeated the Cleveland Cavaliers, 96-86, Wednesday night, extending Cleveland's road losing streak to eight games.

James scored more than 30 points for the third straight game, Drew Gooden added 14, and Zydrunas Ilgauskas had 13 and 14 rebounds. But it wasn't enough for the Cavaliers, who haven't won on the road since a 109-87 victory at Golden State on Jan. 23. Cleveland plays host of its first six games on the road.

Desmond Mason added 13 points and Mo Williams 12 as the Bucks remained perfect against the Central Division at home with their seventh straight victory. They also snapped the Cavaliers' three-game winning streak.

The true pretested Cleveland from marking its win total from last season—39 games.

In Auburn Hills, Mo Evans, Cleveland Hodges scored 22 points and Rasheed Wallace had nine of his 24 during a key stretch of the fourth quarter to lift the Detroit Pistons to their 10th straight home win.

Rasheed Lewis scored 26 for the Superiors, who had won their four previous road games.

The teams took turns with the lead before Rasheed Wallace turned two steals into a dunk and a mid-range jumper, giving the Pistons a 91-90 lead. Richard Hamilton then connected on a 3-pointer, and Tayshaun Prince made two free throws to seal the victory.

Seventh Ray Allen missed all four of his shots and was held to two points in the first half before finishing with 20 points on 6-of-13 shooting.

In Atlanta, Gilbert Arenas had 28 points and Larry Hughes added 22 as the Washington Wizards had a season high point total.

The Wizards used a 24-2 run in the fourth quarter to win consecutive games for the first time since Feb. 9, a span of 13 games.

At Washington's 38-footer with 10:43 remaining in the 96-point lead (84-76), but the Hawks failed to score a field goal on their next 13 possessions.

Arenas, who was 4-for-8 on 3-point attempts, hit two keys during the 24-2 run.

At East Rutherford, New Jersey, Vince Carter scored 30 points and Jason Kidd set the tone as the New Jersey Nets took control early and completed a season sweep of the Chicago Bulls.

Kidd had 22 points, 11 rebounds and eight assists as the Nets posted their seventh straight win over the Bulls. Jason Collins had 14 points and 11 rebounds and Nenad Krstic added 11 points.

The Bulls, who never led, played without leading scorer Eddy Curry (15.6 points per game), who missed the game with a left hamstring strain. They struggled to pick up the slack, with the bench doing most of the scoring as the starters combined for only 37 points.

In Boston, Paul Pierce and Antoine Walker each scored 26 points, and the Boston Celtics nearly blew a 16-point fourth-quarter lead before pulling out their 38th straight win.

The victory was Boston's ninth in 10 games since acquiring Walker from Atlanta on Feb. 24.

Tony Allen finished with 14 points for Boston, including eight of big baskets in the final 1:49, while Davis had 14.

Jamal Rose led the Raptors with a season-high 31 points and Chris Bosh had 20 before leaving with a bruised knee early in the final quarter.

In Indianapolis, Stephen Jackson scored 28 points and the Indiana Pacers hit 27 of 33 free throws.

Utah rookie Indiana beat the Bobcats, but the Pacers spent much of the night in the free throw line. Jackson shot just 8 of 16 from the field but was 6-of-6 from 3-point range and 12-of-12 on free throws.

Reggie Miller scored 21 points and Anthony Johnson 22 for Indiana. Marketus Tibbs scored 26 points and Jaydee Kirilenko 15 for Utah. AP

Tuesday's results

Boston 110, Toronto 100; Indiana 103, Utah 84; New Jersey 100, Chicago 84; Washington 122, Atlanta 80; Detroit 102, Seattle 91; Milwaukee 96, Cleveland 86; Memphis 98, New Orleans 82; Houston 108, Portland 77; San Antonio 80, Minnesota 73; Denver 120, Charlotte 101; Los Angeles Clippers 113, Orlando 102.

FORMER Major League Baseball star Jose Canseco (right) talks to during a live interview following his testimony on baseball's steroids problem, Marvin Kalb at RFK Satellite Radio in Washington. AFP

Poll says Americans want to punish doping athletes

WASHINGTON—Polling results released on the eve of a US Congressional hearing into steroids in baseball showed grave concern by the numerous public and a desire for strong punishment for drugs cheat players.

An ABC News-ESPN poll found more than 80 percent support for having recently members from baseball's all-star ranks and 66 percent say steroids should be enough to render a player ineligible for baseball Hall of Fame consideration.

Barry Bonds, artisan home run efforts have been clouded by questions of steroids, owns the one-season home mark of 73 set in 2001 and is approaching Hank Aaron's all-time career mark of 755.

More than 70 percent of those replying to ABC-ESPN said Bonds should have been subpoenaed to the hearing. Bonds was not because of concerns one would rule in the us going forth (I) warned criminal case.

Similar concerns prompted the US Justice Department to execute New York Yankee slugger Jason Giambi from testifying, using his possible testimony in the BALCO case, where four men are charged in connection distribution.

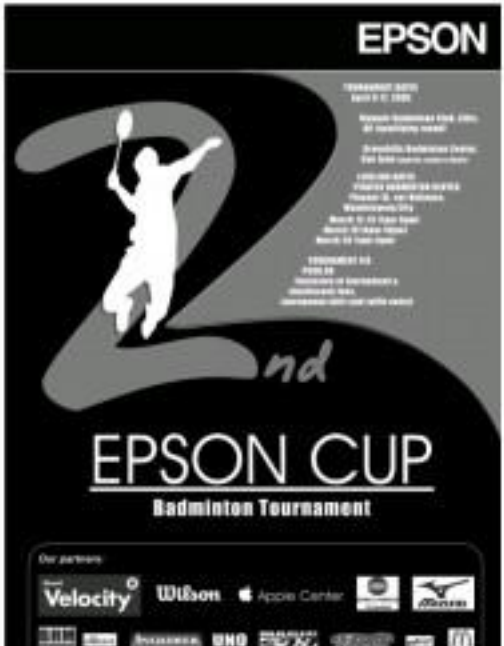
USA Today revealed a survey of 1665 players Wednesday that showed 7% percent believed steroids played a role in record-breaking performances by star players and 27 percent said performance-enhancing drugs were a "major contributor" to home records.

"I believe that," echoed Fay Vincent, Major League Baseball's commissioner from 1989 to 1992. "It's hard to believe that anybody could not believe that." About 30 percent of players aren't a player to found to hit 500 career records, his records should be stricken or marked with an asterisk.

The newspaper survey, conducted between Feb. 17 and March 9, showed 68.8 percent of players thought the new steroids testing plan was as strict as it should be, although lawmakers have criticized it as hopelessly inadequate.

"It doesn't surprise me," commissioner chair Tom Davis said of the findings. "That's like asking trial lawyers if more suit rebuttal is necessary. You answer is going to be 'No.'"

The survey showed 86 percent of players stated that fewer than half of all major league players take steroids but only 10.9 percent said fewer than half of all players take steroids, which are not banned under the new policy. AFP



InqBox

Question of the Week

Some Abu Sayyaf members detained in Camp Bagong Diwa killed their 5 prison guards, in an attempt to escape. Some civilians and Abu Sayyaf members died as a result. What do you think of the quality of security in our police and military detention areas?

Senders of short (5 lines or less) answers will be published on Tuesday's InqBox and, each week, one "Inquirer Mag" is

METRO

SUERTRES 1 5 2 SIX DIGIT 4 4 1 2 8 7 EZ2 3B 1L

SUPERLOTTO 6/49 7 16 18 19 38 41 P55,681,239.60

SWEEPSTAKES 3 3 1 6 3 6 5 P100,000.00

VERGEL DE DIOS GIVES IT ONE MORE WEEK

Edsa pink fences to stay, says MMDA

By Tarra V. Quismundo

UNDETERRED by the barrage of complaints and resistance over its pink fences on portions of Edsa, the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) said the barriers would stay for at least one more week.

"Like in the breath of the dumb," said Angelito Vergel de Dios, MMDA Traffic Operations Center executive director. "It's not a one-shot observation. But to make it simple, we would be pending on reports."

Vergel de Dios explained that the fences were part of a three-week traffic management experimental stunt at easing congestion on Edsa.

After the three weeks were over, we period, agency officials will assess the adverse and beneficial to possible amendments.

"We've come into two weeks, so there's one week more. After this, we would make adjustments depending on recommendations of our officers," said Vergel de Dios yesterday, lamenting the down-pour of complaints about the contrivance.

However, the traffic director said that end of the observation period would not mean the removal of steel fences. Instead, he added, options would be explored to make the fences work better.

"Before we put up the fences, traffic was already bad in those areas," Vergel de Dios said, referring to portions of Edsa where fences had been put up, particularly those on the southbound lane from Santolan Road to Ortigas avenues and near the Magallanes interchange in Makati City.

The MMDA-erected pink fences on portions of Edsa to segregate buses from light vehicles by limiting the public utility vehicles to the two outer lanes of the thoroughfare. On the average, some 3,000 buses make some 187,000 trips along Edsa daily.

Vergel de Dios said agency officials, traffic operations officers and traffic enforcers posted in areas where pink fences had been erected, had been meeting regularly to tackle the steel barriers scheme.

"We are doing something that seems to have not yielded results yet, so we have to finish of other steps to satisfy the people," he added.

The MMDA had begun preparing tube lights which would be installed on the openings within the steel fences that serve as access points for light vehicles.

Vergel de Dios said the tube lights shall serve as warning issues for motorists using the openings at night.

'PASYON' STILL ALIVE
A woman leads the traditional Palaspas or Pasyon, a Lenten ritual, in a home in Sampaloc, Manila. The Pabasa, which is no more practiced since Spanish times, is a revelation in song of the passion of Christ.

Rehab plan proposed for QC sex workers

By CJ Yap

POSSIBLY exploited and pushed into the sex trade in Quezon City may soon get better protection from the law, and would be made to undergo counseling and rehabilitation.

Patrons of commercial sex workers, pimps, and establishments condoning prostitution, on the other hand, won't get off that easily.

Quezon City Councilor Annie Susan A. Isaac proposed an ordinance giving better protection and support services to exploited sex workers. He said sex workers who get into the illegal flesh trade because they were subject of, or drawn, deception, exercise, abduction or fraud are victim of sexual exploitation, and should be supported by the city through counseling and rehabilitation programs.

Anti-prostitution laws often snared against sex workers, particularly women and children, while patrons were frequently shielded from the law, he added.

Isaac proposed penalties of up to one year in jail, and a maximum of P5,000 in fines for regular sex workers, their patrons, pimps, and business establishments promoting the sex trade.

On the other hand, sex workers who were victims of exploitation shall undergo three months of mandatory counseling and rehabilitation under the Department of Social Welfare and Development, on the first offense.

But if the victim makes subsequent offenses, he or she would be jailed for one month up to one year, while continuing the mandatory counseling and rehabilitation programs.

Isaac also proposed the creation of an anti-prostitution task force to develop programs addressing the problems of exploited sex workers.

These include launching an information campaign against prostitution, and providing sustainable livelihood skills, training, and financial support to the sex workers. Temporary shelter and health services would also be provided to anti-prostitution centers in the city.

Gastroenteritis afflicts 14 studes in Munti

By Jocelyn R. Uy

MALE D' dee dreaun?

At least 14 grade school students of Dr. Le Edle Santiago Elementary School in Mabeng, Montecito City, were downed with gastroenteritis after attending class graduation ball Wednesday night.

The students, all Grade 7 students aged 13 years old, experienced abdominal pains and loose bowel movement after eating mango and sandwich crepe served at the ball held in an upscale country club in Mabeng, said the school doctor, who refused to disclose her name.

But the physician was quick to stress that they were still not sure whether the crepe actually caused the gastroenteritis.

Some of the students were rushed to the Asian Hospital in Montilupa City, the doctor added.

Sought for comment, Asian Hospital personnel denied that any gastroenteritis cases were brought to them.

Gastroenteritis is the irritation and inflammation of the digestive tract, food poisoning is one of the possible causes.

Abdominal cramps, nausea and vomiting diarrhea, loss of appetite, weakness, fever or chills and dehydration are the common symptoms of gastroenteritis.

Two of the victims, who showed less signs of gastroenteritis, came to the school clinic yesterday morning while practicing for their graduation rites.

They complained of abdominal pain, the physician added.

A Montilupa City Hall official confirmed the incident and said some of the students were already sent home from the hospital after their condition had stabilized.

The official, who asked not to be named, also said the city health office already sent a team to the Asian Hospital to investigate the case.

The suspected cases of gastroenteritis came on the heels of the deaths last week of 27 pupils of a public school in Bohol.

Pesticide contamination of a common delicacy of sea cucumber was the cause of the deaths.

Two funerals, and love that lasts

By Edwar C. Tandoc Jr.

WHEN she was still strong, she would attend court hearings on the murder case of her daughter, clinging to the victim's photo.

Yesterday, Inocencia G. Torres, who died on Sunday, was finally laid to rest.

"I will miss her company and support," Elizabeth's daughter Kay Torres said at the funeral mass presided by afternoon at the Loyola Memorial Park in Marikina City.

Inocencia died on Sunday night due to complications from pneumonia. She was 90.

Marcia Dorothy Jones in real life, was murdered three years ago in an office building in Greenhills, San Juan.

Another three are after her husband Fred Lawrence Torres, who allegedly planned and carried out her murder.

Being the only grandchildren, Torres said she was very close to Inocencia.

"Lo-lo (as nursing brothers) on my fishing pajamas. Ayaw (don't) niya ang kanan. Tapos pagsabihin niya sa akin sa Amen (She would shift positions and tell me to say one and send them to me in the Heaven)," Torres said. "I was very touching. It was a labor of love," she added.

The funeral march began at 4 p.m. from the viewing chapel inside the park. By 4:30 p.m. her tomb, beside that of Elizabeth, was sealed.

At the Pasig City Demurrer earlier, the Sarmiento family gathered for the funeral of Judge and Richard Sarmiento, the two brothers who disagreed while trying to save passengers of a sinking Dona Paz River last December.

Their parents and five siblings were all present at the event, the family's first reunion in recent years. Friends and neighbors joined the march from the family's dentry in Barangay Florida in the cemetery.

The family interment then resumed in their subdivision at the Rizal Memorial Cemetery, where Rodel and Richard, who were considered heroes by residents near the ferry landing. Others helped in paying for burial expenses, according to the brothers' uncle, Randy Nocejo. The Negros Occidental provincial government shouldered the air fare of the brothers' mother and other relatives. Other Pasig officials and the Rotary Club of Pasig City also gave donations.

MetroBriefs

Bomb in Ortigas

POLICE yesterday found an improvised explosive device inside a building in the Ortigas Business District in Pasig City but the bomb failed to explode because the timer did not explode for unknown reasons.

"It looked somewhat complete," said Ludovic Police District Director Oscar Valenzuela, adding initial reports from bomb experts. The bomb was discovered inside a toilet by a janitor at the 15th floor of the Ortigas Building on San Miguel Avenue. The janitor immediately informed a security guard, who in turn informed a bomb squad from the Philippine National Police (PNP) Explosive Ordnance Disposal Unit at the Bureau of Jail Management and Penology (BJMP) Pasig Boys Town, Taguig City on March 14. At least 23 suspected Abu Sayyaf members were killed in the raid. (Edwar C. Tandoc Jr.)

Osang's plea

SEXY Rosanna Roces held her head high before the judge and said: "Not guilty, your honor."

The controversial celebrity and former television host then answered two counts of libel filed against her by popular cosmetic surgeon Vicky Belo, at the Makati Regional Trial Court Branch 59.

Belo alleged that Roces had called her an "unethical doctor" and a news "overdose instructor" and "unscrupulous performer [procedure] on a TV interview. (Tarra V. Quismundo)

PHOTO

H. Block: 98

HARRISON W. Block Hiram Block, journalist, outfit agents, fraudulent lighter and author, passed away on March 11 in Alexandria, Virginia at the age of 98. She will be buried today at the Alexandria Memorial Park in Virginia's Cemetery. Virginia She survived by husband Dr. Isaac Block, eight children, 28 grandchildren, and 30 great-grandchildren. (AP/Yonhap-Solid was Antonio Mula, Pedro Blanco was her second husband.

Missing

JINGGUS C. Lopez, a first-year student from 1961 Guam St., Barangay La Paz, Makati City, has been missing since Sept. 7, 1999. Any information on his whereabouts may be relayed to Yasmine "Boy" Lopez at 870-7713 or 897-5668/85 or to Barangay La Paz Chief Elmer Lopez at 890-7701 or 8909-912.

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Shell battles winless Alaska today

ELIMINATED with a disadvantaging tiebreak, Shell will only have to think about outclassing Alaska's deadly triangle offense.

Stanley Pillow unanimously gives the Turbochargers an edge on both ends of the floor when they clash against the Aces today in the 2005 Coca-Cola PBA Fiesta Conference at the Ynares Sanctuary.

"We can expect advantage will come nothing if we cannot find a way to stop Alaska's triangle offense," said Shell coach Leo Isaraza.

Apart from the enemy's offensive offensive strategy, Isaraza is also quite concerned about the Aces' hunger for a breakthrough victory in their 4:45 p.m. game after three successive defeats.

"We will see struggle while Alaska has all its three games," said Isaraza. "I fear they do lose of stronger might settle up on us."

Coca-Cola faces the same dilemma. The Aces are trying to solve when the Tigers meet the Barangay Ginebra Kings in the other game at 7:30 p.m.

Jo Jo Hablando has also been shaking out inconsistent performances for the Tigers the past three games, with their lone victory against Sta. Lucia Realty in the opener attributed mostly to the heroics of the Coca-Cola locals.

The Turbochargers improved to 2-1 after beating the Purefoods Express, 100-94, the other day, holding down rookies from rising six-time Purefoods, Red Bull and San Miguel Beer.

Looking to their matchup, the Aces will again rely mainly on their locals—Jeffrey Cariaso, Rudy Hugnatan, Mike Cortez and Brandon Cablay—as import Leon Derricks seemingly can't get going.

Coca-Cola coach Eric Altamirano and the Tigers lost to the 7-Eleven, 75-69, two days ago.

In that game, Ray Castillo hit a big triple in the dying seconds as Purefoods thwarted Coca-Cola's last-ditch rally.

A triple by John Ellgo had moved the Tigers within 71-69 when Castillo got away from his guard and sank an almost effortless jump up triple.

Shell's victory over Purefoods was more dramatic, thanks to the rebounding in the second quarter of Express import Anthony Miller, who slumped on the bench after he hurt his groin during a battle underneath the rim.

In Miller's brief absence, the Turbochargers unloaded a 14-2 bomb on route to a 57-38 spread at halftime.

The Kings bounced back from their loss to the Red Bull Barako by downing the Aces in an out-of-town outing recently.

Sta. Lucia (2-1) Dan Gadia will square off with Coca-Cola (1-2) Willie Miller in the main game at 4:45 p.m.

STANDINGS	W	L
Sta. Lucia	2	1
Red Bull	2	1
San Miguel	2	1
Purefoods	2	1
Shell	2	1
7-Eleven	1	1
Talk N	1	2
Coca-Cola	1	2
Sta. Lucia	1	2
Alaska	0	3

CRIS CALIGUIRE: A vital wing for Shell.

BIG WIG MANAGER: San Miguel Corp. president and COO Ramon S. Ang (standing, left) with (from left) SMC sports director Robert Non, PBA commissioner Noli Eala and RP team coach Chot Reyes after accepting his appointment as team manager of the national basketball team. Ang will be represented by Non in the day-to-day operations of the Philippine squad.

FRIDAY, MARCH 18, 2005 PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER B1

BUSINESS

E-mail us at business@inquirer.com.ph
Editor Raoul B. Marcelo
Assistant Editor Connie S. Martinez

Crude oil prices hit new record high

CRUDE oil prices hit a new record high yesterday as the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries' (Opec) pledge to increase output failed to assure traders who were worried about tight supply.

Worries that strong demand, especially in emerging Asian economies, will strain global spare production capacity drove US crude prices to a new record yesterday at $56.60 a barrel. London's Brent crude reached an all-time peak at $53 a barrel.

Light, sweet crude for April delivery rose 31 cents to $56.07 a barrel on the New York Mercantile Exchange by mid-afternoon in Asia. The previous intraday high, set in October, was $55.67 a barrel.

Ultra-scarce diesel has risen more than $7.50 a barrel above the average for 2004 when the market rose 34 percent, prompting fears that sky-high energy costs will stifle global economic growth.

Opec agreed to boost its output quota by 500,000 barrels a day or 1.9 percent, when its members met in Kuwait last week on Wednesday.

The agreement also allows the addition of a further 500,000 bpd later in the second quarter if prices fail to soar below $55.

The market has been unimpressed with Opec's decision, because members of the oil cartel who are supposedly bound by its production quotas are already exceeding the previous ceiling by about 700,000 barrels a day...meaning no extra supply will actually be added.

Opec president and Kuwait Oil Minister Sheikh Ahmad Fahd al-Sabah also said the additional barrels may not come until May since members are already supplying more than planned.

"This is not about lowering prices. It's about stopping them skyrocketing," Peter Hitchcott of New York-based Medley Global Advisers said on the International Oil Daily website. "We are going to be either out of $60 with spikes to around $65."

Traders are worried that demand could soon outstrip supply. China, the world's second biggest oil consumer after the United States, is already guzzling more than a third of the world's crude supplies. Chinese fuel use will rise 7.9 percent this year, or 500,000 barrels a day, to 6.66 million barrels a day, according to the Paris-based International Energy Agency.

The agency said last week it expects petroleum needs this year to increase 2.2 per cent, by 1.61 million barrels a day to a new daily record of 84.3 million barrels.

Crude futures shot up more than $3 a barrel after the latest petroleum supply report from the US government showed a sharp fall in domestic supplies of gasoline and heating oil last week.

In its latest report for the week ending March 11, the Energy Information Administration said gasoline stocks fell by almost three times more than expected, by 2.9 million barrels, to 221.4 million barrels, compared with consensus forecasts for a build of 500,000 barrels.

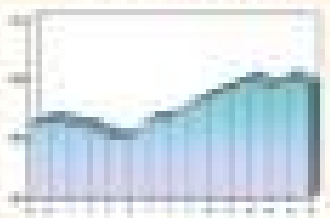
But Opec may begin talks as early as next week over a renewed output rise, the head of the producers' cartel said yesterday.

"If prices continue as they are now, then starting from next week we will start our discussions," Sheikh Ahmad told reporters.

(AFP, Bloomberg)

Currencies

PESO-DOLLAR RATE



$1 = ₱56.13
As of 5 p.m., March 17, 2005

$1 = 106.17 yen
As of 5 p.m., March 17, 2005

GOLD: US$430.40
per troy ounce, Hong Kong, March 17, 2005

Stock Market

March 17, 2005 Country	Index	Daily Equivalent	Ending Equivalent	Prev. Equivalent
United States				
Japan				
United Kingdom				
Hong Kong				
Netherlands				
Canada				
Germany				
Singapore				
Australia				
Taiwan				
South Korea				
France				
Switzerland				
Thailand				
India				
Italy				
Spain				
China				
Malaysia				
Belgium				
Indonesia				
Mexico				
Brazil				
Philippines				
South Africa				
Russia				
New Zealand				
Norway				
Sweden				
Austria				
Denmark				
Finland				
Ireland				
Portugal				
Greece				
Turkey				
Hungary				

Shares close flat

Stocks' prices closed flat yesterday, ending days after a five-day losing streak as bargain hunting emerged and investors looked ahead to today's listing of Manila Water, dealers said.

(continued on A2)

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX

Telecom firms blame NTC for price war

By Clarissa B. Batino
Inquirer news

SPECIAL REPORT

It will be no easy war going to bed in the death of the telecom industry.

The question may be rightly called alarmist, except that it was hurled by Telecommunications Commissioner Oliver Ronald Jude Samuel who joined it.

Jude seems to be leaving for the worst, as the NTC walks a fine line between heeding public clamor for lower prices and facing a system breakdown. He said he was worried that the salvage oil pricing war would cause the network to burn in the months to come. To date, there are about 34 million mobile phone subscribers in the country today.

It does not help that the telecom industry is also facing a slowdown in the economy.

Rogelio Quirante, head of legal at Smart Communications Inc., accused the NTC of not doing its job by allowing the price war to get out of hand. The NTC, he said, was a serious regulator.

"It is the players themselves that are saying that we are ready to do [price] in such a way that it can accommodate a 24/7 customized plan and still meet the performance standard. For me, the system will crash if everybody goes into this kind of thing," Jude admitted.

There was little public hand-wringing when it was just the Globe-Smart duopoly that ruled the country's telecom industry. But exactly a month ago, Smart signed the dots, when it launched a cheaper promotional plan to its prepaid subscribers. Of Smart's more than 19.5 million subscribers, 90 percent are prepaid subscribers.

Globe has since countered that it had devised a way to prevent network traffic jams. Globe

This announcement appears as a matter of record only

ASIAN HOSPITAL AND MEDICAL CENTER

₱1,972,000,000.00

Restructuring of
Foreign and Local Currency Debt

Financial Advisor
ATR - KIM ENG

February 2005

This announcement appears as a matter of record only

GLOBE TELECOM

has acquired 5,804,094 Globe shares
representing 5.76% of its
outstanding common stock

at the purchase price of ₱950.00 per share
for an aggregate amount of

₱7,660,000,000.00

Advisor
ATR - KIM ENG

Depositary
ATR - KIM ENG

March 2005

WALK THE WALK OF HIGH TRADE
China Metallurgical Corp. officials are given a warm welcome by executives of the Philippine Metals and Minerals Group at the Mactan-Cebu International Airport. 'Kong' Ko, general manager of China Metallurgical's second from right), are shown with his associates to invest in manganese and ferronickel mines in Mindanao.

Foreign firms eye RP nickel project

MINING company Benguet Corp. yesterday said six foreign firms had expressed an interest in the exploration and development of its $800 million nickel project.

In a statement to the stock exchange, Benguet said it was in discussions with a Japanese group that included Sumitomo Metal Mining Corp. and Itochu Buildings Corp. for the exploration and development of its nickel laterite property in Zambales.

It said it had also received inquiries and proposals about the project from Canada's Dunbee Nickel and Platinum Ltd., Australia's Eramia Mining N.L. and Metallurgical Construction Corp. of China.

Benguet would be a major beneficiary of a drive by the government to attract offshore investment to its mining industry, a move that coincides with a growing Chinese appetite for raw materials.

Benguet, formed in 1903 and the pioneer of large-scale mining in the Philippines, has said it needs at least $800 million for detailed exploration and development of its nickel property in Zambales.

It said it had also initiated talks with several foreign firms to conduct due diligence on four other exploration and development projects.

This included the King King copper and gold project in the Cordillera Cottapamingan Valley, and the Balatoc famous gold project and Antipocan copper-gold project in the north.

Benguet said it needed $100 million to prepare the final feasibility study to raise down reserves of King King.

King King is one of 22 priority projects in mining promoted by the government to revive the mining industry.

The country, aiming on what the government estimates is $1 trillion in unexplored mineral wealth, wants local and foreign mining firms to pump about $6 billion into 10 priority projects over the next six years—investments that would open up suppliers and taxes to help plug a chronic budget deficit.

The Mines and Geosciences Bureau said King King has an estimated reserve of 301 million tons of 0.39 percent copper and 0.049 ounces of gold per ton of ore, worth $1.75 billion. Reuters

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List of Participating Dealers

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DOE to wrap up $20-M gas deal with Ukraine firm

By Abigail L. Ho

THE DEPARTMENT of Energy is set to conclude negotiations with Ukrainian state-run giant Ashkin Energy for an investment of at least $20 million in the country's natural gas industry.

The investment, said Energy Undersecretary Peter Anthony Abaya, would be for the establishment of one mother station, and between two and five daughter stations, in strategic parts in the country.

Abaya yesterday confirmed in a telephone interview that the DOE had indeed been negotiating with Ashkin Energy for some months now and that a memorandum of understanding would be signed any day now.

"We're in the middle of [with negotiations with Ashkin Energy]," he said. "We're moving toward the signing of an MOU."

According to Abaya, Ashkin Energy chairman Eugene Ashkin is actually in the country right now for the negotiations.

Ashkin is considered the father of natural gas in Ukraine.

Abaya said the negotiations with Ashkin Energy are in line with the government's broad strategy in aggressively develop the country's natural gas industry.

In late January, the DOE and the Malampaya Gas Project Co.-Power consortium signed a memorandum of agreement stating that compressed natural gas (CNG) would be sold for P34.52 per normal cubic meter for the seven-year duration of the National Gas Vehicle for Public Transport (NGVPT) Pilot Project.

CONTD

Organic, natural products exports seen at $450M

Men's role in the women's movement

By Gemma M. Orduña

As #IE celebrates Women's month this March, it is necessary that we understand the state's role in the nation's development. Inimical to agriculture, we quote this Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) statement: "Given women's crucial roles in and contributions to food security, any effort is to realize food security worldwide must take into consideration the factors and constraints affecting women's ability to carry out these roles and make these contributions, with a view to removing the constraints and enhancing women's capacities."

In the Philippines, one of these constraints is the male farmer's reluctance to allowing the female farmer to achieve her full potential. This is because of traditional gender stereotyping.

Sex and gender

The concept of gender has not been well defined and well understood. The definition of gender was even the subject of a United National special session in connection with the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, which I had the privilege to attend.

Gender is often confused with sex. Sex generally refers to biology and anatomy. By contrast, gender refers to a set of qualities and behaviors required from a female or male by society.

As feminist-health states: "Gender roles are learned and can be affected by factors such as education and economics. They vary widely within and among cultures. While an individual's sex does not change, gender roles are usually determined and can evolve over time."

To address this issue, organizations such as the Center for Asia Pacific and Women in Politics (CAPWIP) and the National Confederation of Cooperatives/Yanyan PMAO conducted seminars to gender sensitivity for women. Bai- nihon Bunnin Kikkou of Cagayan, executive director Imelda Sumcad of Davao and Fe Perey Bacani of the Mindanao tao Ho Jesus measured the progress of the seminar participants. They found out obstacles. The most three women encountered with regard the women's new role.

COMMENTARY

Men talking about men

This was born a new seminar: "Men Talking to Men about Men." In this seminar, attended by both urban and rural men, they discovered that men had three main fears and three main characteristics.

According to Father Bacani, the men's three fears revolved around things they felt they had little power to control: feelings, money and death. The three status symbols were power, work and sex.

During the seminar, the men were encouraged to discard the gender stereotypes society required of them. Instead, they were asked to talk about their true selves and how they really wanted to relate to society.

The participants shared their stories liberating, to follow-up activities with them, Father Bacani discovered another benefit. Since these men could now be themselves, they were also more open to the women being themselves and thus fulfill their full potential. And vice versa.

Farmers compared to non-farmers

Father Bacani said there was a difference between male farmers and non-farmers in this area: "The male farmers tend to be more traditional and rigid. Before the seminar, they resist their women partners taking on new gender roles that threaten their own male gender stereotypes. However, after the seminar, the farmers show a greater change than their male counterparts because they have more time on the rural setting to discuss these issues with the women."

The result is that both the rural and women farmers are able to discard the dysfunctional gender stereotypes, fulfill their own respective potentials, and emerge more satisfied and happier with their sex-based gender self-definitions.

When it comes to men talking to men, Sumcad observes: "Because of the many quiet settings in the rural areas, male farmers have a greater opportunity to talk among themselves, especially during their drinking sessions. There is a saying in the Visayan rural areas: 'Nag asaja pahuros, basi na ay sumosunod (even if there is nothing to eat, as long as there is opportunity to talk)." Sumcad says that the male seminar participants have found them- selves talking about their sentiment gender self-definitions during these drinking sessions. They have discovered that their male friends withholdentically-oblivious liberties.

Conclusion

In a book "The Hazards of Being Male" Herb Goldberg states: "The male has paid a heavy price for his masculine 'privilege' and 'power.' He is out of touch with his emotions and his body. Only a new way of perceiving himself can unlock him from old, disruptive patterns and enrich his life."

In the Philippine rural countryside, the traditional male gender stereotyping has impacted not only the men but also affected the full development of the women in their critical role of promoting agricultural development.

During this Women's month of March, and inspired by the success demonstrated by the efforts of Tikkers, Sumcos and Father Bacani, it is suggested that both government and private sector organizations launch more aggressive interventions to promote men's gender awareness. In so doing, the men's role in the women's movement will be transformed from possible resistance to proactive complementation and support, especially in the upland rural areas.

(The author is the chair of Agrisearch, a private sector initiative; former Cabinet secretary for Presidential Flagship Programs and Projects; and former undersecretary for agriculture, and trade and industry. For inquiries and suggestions, email agrisearchphil@yahoo.com or telefax 8536603.)

By Bunnie W. Domingo

THE GOVERNMENT is working on the development of the country's organic and natural products exports, earnings from which are seen to grow tenfold to $450 million by 2010.

Norm Ring is the Center for International Trade Expositions and Missions (Citem), the country shipped out $46.8 million worth of organic products in the first 10 months of 2005.

Citem officials said in a press briefing yesterday the agency was optimistic that local producers could source a bigger chunk of the $31 billion-a-year global market as the government sets spending on the certification of the products and trade promotion efforts.

The global market is expected to grow to $300 billion in 2008, industry data show.

Last year, exports of organic products included muscovado sugar, green bokayan flavanol, banana chips, coconut cooking oil, desiccated coconut, coconut chips, virgin coconut oil and dried banaba leaves.

Major export destinations were Japan, Europe, United States, Canada, Singapore, Australia, Korea and Chile.

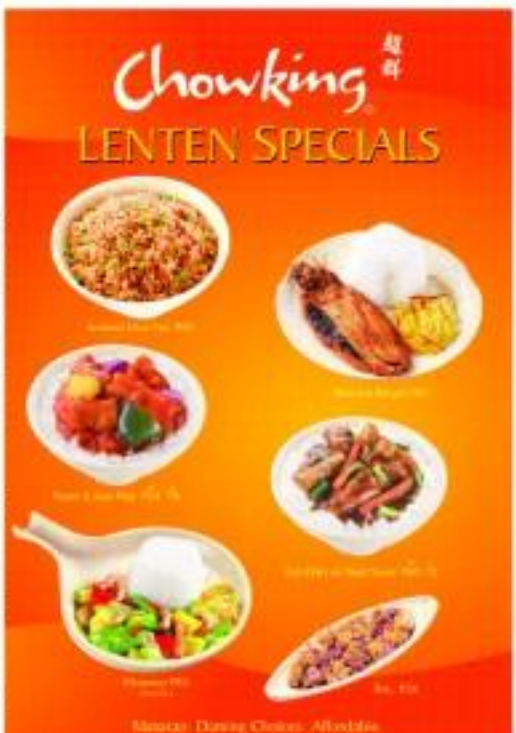
Citem said the consumers' growing awareness on healthier eating habits, food safety and the ongoing debate on genetically modified organisms were nurturing the growing demand for organic food.

Weighs zoomed all, mountainside sugar and organic rice are expected to boost exports to the United States, where imports of organic food and beverages are seen to be growing to $20 billion a year.

"We hope that more producers would shift to organic farming while existing organic food producers get into the export business because of the opportunities that abroad," Citem executive director Felicisimo Agustin de Reyes said.

The government's agenda for the sector includes shifting to organic agriculture practices, strengthening the certification of organic products, nurturing the local and international market, and increasing areas of plantation.

Citem said agricultural lands devoted to organic farming cover a total area of 13.8 million hectares or just 0.01 percent of the total. This is expected to rise to one percent of the total by 2010.



UP economy, tax experts warn vs unwarranted VAT exemptions

By Dario C. Damiles

A GROUP of economists and tax experts yesterday warned against "unnecessary" exemptions in the value added tax measure, saying that it could make the law appear "more inequitable, difficult to administer and inefficient."

"We believe that if a more prudent is limit the scope of the new VAT bill to an increase in the rate from 10 to 12 percent," according to the group that called itself the Alliance for Enlightened Public Policies. "The measure is painful but the distribution of worsening our debt problem is more painful especially for the poor."

The alliance members include former Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Solita Monsod, former Finance Secretary and concurrent Asian Institute of Management president Roberto de Ocampo, former Finance Undersecretary Mildreda Carreon, former Bureau of Internal Revenue Sixto Roxas and former Trade and Agriculture Undersecretary Estelito Cordero.

"There is no justice in asking all taxpayers to pay an additional VAT, while exempting other sectors from paying the VAT," the group said.

"If the government were to include some rationalization in this bill bill, the group said they should be limited to only a few strategic exemptions that were added to the VAT in 1995: lawyers, doctors, cooperatives, the importation of passenger and cargo vessels, sale by the estate of his/her heirs of art, export sales of persons who are not BIR-registered, sale of houses by reduced at P1 million.

"The withdrawal of all other exemptions including that on fuel and energy should be made in the second phase of the reforms in anticipation of the lifting of exemptions on petroleum and power.

With the exemptions retained, the DOE is expecting a total of P66 billion—P45 billion from oil and P21 billion from power—in new revenues.

This is more than half of the P80 billion President Macapagal-Arroyo says the country needs to reduce its borrowings and cut the budget deficit.

The House of Representatives has passed a bill raising the VAT rate from 10 percent to 12 percent, and lifting the exemptions on select industries, including petroleum and power.

The former is close to passing its own version, but it is leaning towards keeping the VAT rate at 10 percent while removing most VAT exemptions.

The President has declared that the government needs to raise the VAT and remove the exemptions. The Palace is now pushing for the passage of the VAT reform bills before Congress goes on its Easter break.

With the outcome of the VAT reform bill still uncertain, Gabriel Claudio, the President's political adviser said that Malacañang was still weighing whether it should call for a special session.

"It depends on whether the Senate would be able to pass a version of the VAT bill by October," Claudio said.

Press documents obtained by the Inquirer showed that the P3.65 per liter increase was based on the average price of all fuel products, as of mid-February, pegged at P32.12 per liter in 2003, 16.9 billion liters of fuel were sold.

The DOE data showed that diesel, which fuels public buses and jeepneys, would contribute P19.05 billion in new taxes to the government with the estimated P2.89 per liter increase in its price.

On power, the DOE estimated that the imposition of a full 12 percent VAT on independent power producers would push up the power rates on end users rates by an average of 61.3 to per kWh nationwide.

Households in the Manila Electric Co. franchise area will fork out an additional 80.17 centavos per kWh with the 12 percent VAT while those in the Visayas would pay 64.37 centavos per kWh more and Mindanao 51.36 per kWh more.

The DOE stated that these estimates were based on assumptions that IPPs would pass on the entire VAT to consumers and that they have the same operating costs as the National Power Corp.

With increased VAT, fuel to cost P2.65 more per liter, says DOE

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

PETROLEUM may have to shell out P2.65 per liter more on their fuel purchases and add 62.54 centavos per kilowatt hour on their electricity bills under the Malacañang-backed proposal to slap a 12-percent value-added tax (VAT) on previously exempted oil companies and power producers.

The Department of Energy came up with

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Gov't seeks WB loan program to pay off debt

By Michelle V. Remo

THE PHILIPPINE government plans to ask the World Bank for a loan program that will help it invest in ballooning debt, and allow it to free some of its limited budget to fund vital expenditures such as infrastructure projects and social services.

Finance Secretary Juan Ponce Enrile explained that under the proposed loan program, the World Bank would provide credit to the Philippines to pay off its maturing obligations from commercial lenders. Since the World Bank offers a much lower interest rate than commercial lenders, the country would be able to save on interest payments, he added.

The savings would enable the government to become more flexible in managing its unserviced budget.

The savings can be used to increase funds for infrastructure or basic services, he said.

But Purisima said that to convince the World Bank to come up with a loan program for the Philippines, the government should first show proof that it was serious and capable of addressing its fiscal problems.

"We should send the right signal and, to do that, we should set goals that are achievable and fulfill them," Purisima said in a speech before members of the financial executives of the Philippines during a meeting on Wednesday.

The finance chief said that the Department of Finance would work on the reduction of the cash deficit, the consolidated public sector deficit (CPSD) and the country's gross domestic product (GDP).

The CPSD—the combined deficits of the national government, state-owned corporations and local government units—stood at P585 billion last year. The figure was equivalent to 5.4 percent of the GDP in 2004.

The DOF hopes to reduce the CPSD to GDP ratio by 2.5 percent.

Purisima said that should the government achieve the goal, the IMF will then ask the World Bank to provide the Philippines with what he called the "Fiscal Reform Program."

He said the DOF has first raised the proposal with the World Bank, and with other multilateral lenders, during the recent Philippine Development Forum.

ING bearing on BIR boss

DEPUTY Internal Revenue Commissioner Elvira Arcinas-Bonnaoyag was fired by the Bureau of Internal Revenue today on the recommendation of Finance Secretary Margarito B. Teves, who ordered the seizure of the 1996 BMW 318i company car that BIR had been trying to take back from Bonnaoyag since her formerly rumored dismissal in June of the Bush bank's compliance and legal department nearly five years ago.

Bonnaoyag, who is said to be one of Teves' favorite officials, was fired by the BIR's executive committee (excom), as well.

According to a statement issued by the Department of Finance (DOF), Bonnaoyag was dismissed for "conduct unbecoming of a public official" and "violation of reasonable office rules and regulations."

PLDT group in talks with US, Singapore carriers for tie-ups

By Clarissa S. Batino

MANUEL PANGILINAN

PLDT group wants to cash in on about 8 million Filipinos working overseas who are sending about $8 billion in cash home to the Philippines yearly.

There are about 400,000 Filipinos in North America and about 85,000 in Singapore.

Smart has to begin partnerships with carriers in the host countries because it needs to put in infrastructure surrounding in those areas to deliver its services.

"We hope to launch the service in Singapore by June or July," Pangilinan said.

There are three big players in that country such as Singapore Telecom, M1 and Starhub.

Singapore Telecom is the major shareholder of PLDT's Philcom class Globe Telecom.

"We will also launch 1528 in North America shortly after Singapore. We are learning from the DR model. There, we bought recycling, as there is a significant investment in UK. In Singapore, we will do some outsourcing," said the head of PLDT Global.

Pangilinan said PLDT Global made between P65 million and P117 million a month in revenues for the year. By the end of the year, we will hit 30 percent of the market," the official said, expressing confidence.

PLDT chair Manuel Pangilinan earlier said the group was also looking at penetrating the Middle East market where millions of Filipinos work.

The problem with the Middle East market, according to the PLDT chair, is the difficulty in forging partnership with companies there which are mostly 2G not all, owned by the royal family.

Pangilinan said the 8 million Filipinos working overseas would be a big market for the integrated services of the PLDT group's fixed-line and international gateway wireless and data operations.

Japan firm plans health center in Subic

SUBIC BAY FREEPORT — Picking up on its initiative to promote this former American naval base as tourist haven, a medical hub and a retirement village, Int. Richard Gordon recently brought here a medical team from Japan that planned to put up some health center.

"They have stopped believing in Subic Bay" said Gordon, a former maritime secretary, to be named members of the Tokushukai Medical Group, one of the world's largest chain of private health institutions.

"So I thought of bringing them here as a continuation of the effort that we have been talking about for the last four years. We are trying to help them stay and hopefully we get more investments," he said.

Tokushukai is the largest network of services provider in Japan, and has 217 medical facilities worldwide, including 57 general hospitals. It plans to put up a 1,000-bed, $100-million hospital, which will be called the Dwight Eisenhower Memorial Hospital.

Gordon said they had already considered a plan to build a Filipino center in Japanese hospitals so they could be exposed to Japanese "style" of medical procedures.

"They can have special care and special procedures made here. Japanese and Filipino doctors can work together and do what this particular doctor to have a relatively inexpensive but certainly high-end medical facilities here," he said.

He said Dr. Takao Suzuki, president and chief executive officer of the Tokushukai Medical Group, was optimistic about the plan.

"Subic can very well accommodate Tokushukai. The presence of an airport and a seaport can be used to bring in medical equipment and goods as well as medicines from all over the Asian region," Gordon said.

Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority Administrator Alfredo Antonio said hosting a central medical center would benefit not only province but also Pampanga, Zambales and even Bataan.

Allan Macatuno, PDI Central Luzon Desk

CONSISTENCY

Enforcement of telco rules urged

By CONSTITUTION among the country's mobile phone companies might, particularly with their unlimited call-and-text offerings, government regulators are urged to ensure the strict enforcement of consistent performance standards among the players.

Globe Telecom made this call as the National Telecommunications Commission holds hearings on the complaints filed by the firm's subscribers, Innove Communications, and Smart/PLDT against Sun Cellular operations in the Visayas and Mindanao.

However, the carrier of the Tuazon Mobile (TM) brand, had filed a case with the NTC against Digitel, citing the substandard performance of Sun's network when measured against established NTC guidelines. This was triggered by Sun's 24/7 unlimited call-and-text service, which allegedly had adversely affected the network's performance.

At the NTC hearing on March 7, Innove presented as evidence the results of a quarterly benchmarking drive test, a regular monitoring of network quality. The report showed that Sun's network performance had failed to meet the specified standards since the month of the 24/7 service.

In the drive test conducted by Globe last January, Sun Cellular had an average drop call rate (DCR) of 5.09 percent and a 35.4 percent grade of service (GOS) over a testing period of 14 days.

Official NTC standards provide an allowable DCR of 3 percent and a GOS of 7 percent. The DCR refers to the percentage of calls that are irregularly terminated out of the total number of calls made during the period covered, while the GOS measures the probability that a call will fail to connect at the first attempt during a peak traffic period.

With this report, Globe is calling for the consistent enforcement of the NTC standards in order to ensure healthy competition and provide better service to consumers.

"There should not be one standard for the incumbents and a lower standard for Sun," said Jhoshua Canda, Globe Telecom's head of regulatory affairs.

"In the interest of the consumers, Globe is appealing to the NTC to strictly implement the existing Interim Standards. This will ensure that the public is getting the quality service they deserve, and which Globe has committed to provide by complying with the said standards."

Canda also addressed the legal issues raised by Digitel in its response to the complaint filed by Innove. He said that Innove has no legal personality as an unfranchised wireless carrier, Canda said Innove was the former Isleacom. The change of name was approved by the Securities and Exchange Commission.

Telcos blame NTC for price war

From page B1

ment complaint about Sun Cellular's unlimited offering. Dimayuga claimed that a network experience would worsen the unlimited calls and threatened to prevent competitors from offering similar services.

But a Smart official pointed out that all networks, no matter how wide and extensive, will always prove vulnerable to congestion. "In 5 jam, habir gusto kagumdu ang network mo, nagsusulpot magta-traffic. This week, we shall see how it turns out," the official said.

Quirendo said the NTC should have acted on the issue before all hell had broken loose. "The NTC is not doing its role as a regulator of the industry. Smart has no choice but to join the price war because it has to protect its market share. Pag nagkakapatol ng presyo ang mga kalaban, sabay-sabay na dapat tayo," the analyst added.

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Failed performance?

Through their smaller units Filipino Dimalinog Corp. and Innove Communications Inc., Smart and Globe have asked the NTC to stop Sun Cellular's 24/7 plan. Their strongest argument: Sun Cellular is failing the performance standards the NTC set in 2002.

An NTC circular laid out two specific standards for mobile providers: one is grade of service as measured by successful first call attempts using the other is a benchmark on dropped calls.

The order required a 93-percent grade of service and a 95-percent dropped-calls index. This means that no more than seven out of every 100 connection attempts should fail on the first try while no more than five out of every 100 calls should be terminated by the network.

The two giant telcos conducted their own dry tests. According to Globe, its test found that 35.4 out of every 100 Sun Cellular calls during a 14-hour average failed to connect, or were dropped in the middle of conversation. Smart's benchmark, however, the Sun network reportedly terminated only 5.09 out of every 100 calls.

But from 6 to 10 p.m., a staggering 87 out of every 100 Sun Cellular calls reportedly did not connect successfully, while dropped calls rose to 14.29.

Filed's tests showed similar results. Quirendo claimed that Sun Cellular unconscionably won all its unlimited calls after 15 minutes, which should raise the network's dropped calls numbers significantly.

Heavy congestion

But Smart and Globe insisted in their legal protest that it was only a couple of years ago when their networks also suffered heavy congestion, said William Yuvienco, senior vice president of Digitel Telecommunications Phils. Inc. and head of the trade unions of Digitel Mobile Phils. Inc., a unit of Digitel.

The 2002 NTC circular was released precisely to remove under following years of awful competition and network failures of the two major players, he said. Now the NTC can no longer apply the service standards it had set earlier because conditions had changed.

Philippine Cellular, head of the NTC's common carrier division, said that the network problem entered in the late 1990s, when text messaging became a full-blown phenomenon. By the middle of 2000, the NTC had ordered phone companies to fill by the six-second pulse instead of rounding off call charges to the next minute because many and more subscribers complained of dropped calls. (Likewise said the level of dropped calls by 2001 far exceeded 5 percent.)

But the major players contested the order before the court and obtained an injunction. The NTC never had the chance to implement the order.

"They cannot do an apple-to-apple comparison now because a lot of things have changed. The leading players, they went through the same growing pains. What we just want is to be given time to expand our network," said Bustamante.

Paradigm shift

The competition has actually got it backwards, Sun Cellular has countered. Its initial pricing strategy is actually going birth to a different level of competition in the industry.

And if the two leading telcos have other cards in the growing the industry and then creating a price for such growth, the new player said the industry should see it some slack, too, because it has introduced a new "paradigm" of competition.

Businesses and clients should be different standards for the new player in the industry depending on what the carriers were charging. He watched for an analogy from the airline industry.

"You cannot charge business class the economy seats. But when you paid economy, don't expect first-class service," he said, by way of explaining why Sun Cellular's unique value-added services, like Cebu Pacific.)

Smart and Globe have naturally opposed Digitel's plea. They said one rule must apply to all and insisted that the regulator not bend the rule to accommodate other players.

Both Smart and Globe said they are sympathize to the idea of different levels of standards.

Avila said he was worried about the consequences of an unchecked price war, other players do as they please, without regard for the consequences of their actions. But noting the marketplace change with the advent of unlimited calls, Avila said the NTC would consult with experts on ways to create an enabling environment for the so-called healthy type of competition to continue to thrive.

He said, for instance, that the NTC could set a specific period during which one all-you-can prices apply, perhaps during off-peak hours.

Whatever the new steps, the regulator cautioned against any knee-jerk reaction to the industry, Avila said. "At the end of the day we shall take into account what is good for consumers."

DOE to wrap up . . .

From page B2

at today's dead price range of between P24.75 and P25.75 a litre, the agreed CNG price of P34.52 per normal cubic meter is more than P1.0 cheaper.

The low CNG price is meant to encourage bus operators to use CNG-fueled buses in their operations. This is not only seen to ease the country's dependence on imported oil, but it may also reduce emissions that are harmful to the environment.

Abaya said the Subic Energy investment here would further up the ante on CNG use, particularly for the public transport system and would give a cheaper alternative to diesel fuel.

The would also be keeping with the government's strategy to develop the natural gas industry.

Apart from the low price of CNG, the government has also put in place some incentive packages as well as some financing options to help entice investors to go into the CNG business.

Energy Secretary Vincent Perez had earlier said that government financial institutions, like the Development Bank of the Philippines, the Land Bank of the Philippines and the Philippine Bank, had some "soft-loan financing packages" for transport operators who would want to convert their fleets to CNG-powered vehicles.

Some incentives had also been put in place, he said, including income tax holidays from the Board of Investments, a tax exemption until an imported CNG motor vehicles and natural gas-vehicle (NGV)-related equipment, and preferential franchises for CNG buses from the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board.

The 9th Ramon Magsaysay Student Essay Competition:
RALLYING INSTITUTIONS FOR EDUCATION

Democracy and What it has Differences and what it hasn't through the Ramon Magsaysay Student Essay Competition (RMSEC) in the Philippines. Open to all the only the competition has limited, fairly general but comprehensive rating corporations and institutions hosted by opportunities, the sponsoring engaging with students for the award.

The Ramon Magsaysay Award Foundation (RMAF) carries with RMSEC with the cooperation of Samsung Electronics Philippines, whose state of arts and products will be displayed at the competition venue for students, college and their schools. Two grand prizes of P150,000 each from RMAF award the national winners, one from each level.

Second level winners Manila Philippines and Mindanao are joined by new partners Knowledge Channel, National Bookstore and Anvil Publishing Inc. – all secondary specialty libraries, magazines, resources that organize to help up attention and communication from media across the country to put. SM Malls announced Samsung a young exhibitors. RMSEC 2004 – to give teachers, parents, students, including through mini-challenge to the winning essays during the competition's Awarding Ceremonies and the presidents of the participating schools' Student Councils.

Belmonte Hotels, for the second straight year, will display RMSEC winners' watercolors in Metro Manila, DET winners and MET winners will carry them as well.

INTEL Philippines through its INTEL Teach training project with the Department of Education (DEPED) will include RMSEC among the programs for participating teachers, with DEPED endorsing the competition to all public and private high schools. RMSEC has also taken partnership to implement educational campaigns, among them: DEPED's National Schools Press Conferences, and the Annual Convention for English Language Teaching (ACTE).

RMSEC studies out to mobilize organizations and educational associations: the Coordinating Council of Private Education Association (COCOPEA), the Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines (CEAP), the Philippine Association of Colleges and Universities (PACU), the Philippine Association of Private Schools, Colleges and Universities (PAPSCU), the Association of Christian Schools, Colleges and Universities (ACSCU), the Philippine Accrediting Association of Schools, Colleges and Universities (PAASCU), the Philippine Association of Teachers and Educators (PATE), the Philippine Association of Supervisors, Educational Administrators and Professors (PASEAP), the English Speaking Union of the Philippines (ESUP), Philippine Normal University (PNU), and the Philippine Association for Graduate Education (PAGE). The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) to endorse RMSEC to college students to as well as endorsement for Higher Education Week to May.

Ateneo de Manila University, Miriam College, Assumption College, De La Salle University, Philippine Normal University, Centro Escolar University, Far Eastern University, University of Santo Tomas, St. Paul University Philippines, University of the Philippines, and the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB) are invited to host regional competitions for RMSEC.

Ateneo de Manila University, Miriam College, Assumption College, De La Salle University, Philippine Normal University, Centro Escolar University, Far Eastern University, University of Santo Tomas, St. Paul University Philippines, University of the Philippines, and the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB) are invited to host regional competitions for RMSEC.

The RMSEC is also partnership exposes the youth to appropriate role models such as the Magsaysay awardees, thus paving a path for the young to grow to social maturation and to enhance the values of personal integrity and selfless service to others. The Magsaysay awardees are invited to participate in the RMSEC by sharing their life stories and their experiences in the field of public and private service. Through this exchange students to constantly motivate on the awardees. The experience offers exposure and lasting inputs for youths searching for role models toward a more productive, ethical and values that Magsaysay Awardees personify. In English is the language of the competition, RMSEC is a vehicle for honing the students' facility in it.

There are many ways for students to compete for RMSEC, they may visit the Magsaysay website – www.rmaf.org.ph, write to Anna Gillespie, to their town school librarians, call 926-3044 or 81, or email rmsec@rmaf.org.ph.

Further may be forwarded to the following chairpersons of the Regional Boards of Judges:

NCR	LUZON	VISAYAS	MINDANAO
Dr. Ma. Lee Tiblani Executive Director & Chairperson, Department of English, School of Humanities, Ateneo de Manila University Loyola Heights, 1108, Quezon City Tel: 426-6001 to 08 Email: mtiblani@ateneo.edu	Prof. Divina L. Bilmen Department of English College of Arts and Sciences University of Northern Philippines Vigan City, Philippines T: (077) 722-2611 to 13 loc. 711 Email: bilmen@yahoo.com	Dr. Lorraine D. Dayrit Dean College of Arts & Sciences West Visayas State University Iloilo City, 5000 Email: T: (033) 320-0867 to 69 local 111 Email: ldayrit@mozcom.com	Prof. Christine Godinez-Ortega College of Arts & Sciences Mindanao State University Main Campus Marawi City, Philippines Email: [illegible]

Peza approves first LGU-run IT park in Bicol

PILI, Camarines Sur—The Philippine Economic Zone Authority (Peza) has approved the application of the provincial government to develop and operate an information technology (IT) park here, the first of its kind in Bicol.

Gov. Luis Raymund Villafuerte Jr. said the park, located within the 150-hectare Capitol Complex in Cadlan, would cater to both foreign and local investors and would provide jobs and computer-based education to local residents.

Villafuerte said the plan included the establishment of an electronics manufacturing, starting with an assembly line of telecommunications equipment, computer hardware, design and fabrication.

Park development will immediately roll on this month, he said. A medical transcription business, computer cafe, gaming center, call center and hat food outlets will be set up.

Villafuerte said the provincial government applied for the IT park development, noting that IT infrastructure facilities were already in place.

The local government unit has been operating the Bicol East Asian Institute of Computer Technology, which has been providing computer-based education to poor students, teachers and government employees since 2003.

"Basic facilities [have] already [been] built, like the administration building, library, laboratory rooms, communication tower with dish antenna capable of satellite communications, and emergency generators that can provide the whole complex with power," Villafuerte said.

He said broadband service with fiber optic cables as transmission line would be tapped to centralize control for the telecommunication and electrical systems.

If park investors would be given incentives, as well as land tenure security, the governor said. —Joan Evamalee Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

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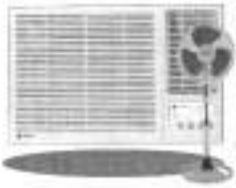

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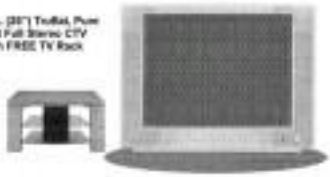

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SMIC IPO to raise ₱28.7B

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

SM INVESTMENTS Corp. (SMIC) of retail magnate Henry Sy expects to raise P28.75 billion ($530 million) from the initial offering of its shares to the public.

SMIC said in a statement that it was offering 115 million of its shares at P250 each.

The shares will be listed on the Philippine Stock Exchange on March 23.

The total shares to be offered make up about 25 percent of the company's total outstanding shares.

Investors familiar with the deal told Inquirer that the roadshow to drum up foreign interest in the shares was well attended and that the effort was four times oversubscribed.

SMIC recently concluded a two-week roadshow that took its officials to 10 cities in Asia, Europe and the United States.

SMIC's IPO is touted to be the biggest public offering since Petron Corp. issued shares in 1994.

The Petron IPO brought in P16 billion in proceeds.

SMIC has interests in commercial centers through mall developer SM Prime Holdings Inc., retail, wholesale and merchandising through department store operations, financial services and banking through Banco de Oro Universal Bank, and real estate development and markets.

Tech firm to invest in depot

PUBLICLINK Information & Technology Inc. plans to diversify into the container yard depot industry.

ITT said in documents filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission that there was great potential in the CY[illegible] industry due to the projected increase in trading activity.

CYDs are storage facilities where imported goods brought in by shipping companies are temporarily stored.

The cargo is then picked by customs brokers, who deliver the goods to the importer.

ITT said the growth in trading activity will require the support of shipping and cargo management services.

Island will use the P[illegible] million it raised from its rights offering to finance the investment.

ITT also plans to be the leading provider of cargo management services through the management and operation of CYDs.

It plans to put up its first CYD in a two-hectare lot in Manila International Container Port in Elizabeth L. Sanchez

DISCLOSURES

ALASKA Milk Corp. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on May 31, 9 a.m. at the Mandaue Holiday Mansion Oriental Manila, Mabolo City, Cebu. Stockholders as of March 7 are entitled to notice of and to vote at the meeting.

EMPIRE East Land Holdings Inc. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on June 14, 9 a.m. at the Cadenood City Information Center, Eastwood City, Web, Quezon City. Stockholders as of April 7 are entitled to notice of and to vote at the meeting.

ATLANTIA Properties Inc. sold its Mandaue Smelter Plant to Philippine Group Metals Corp.

TOWN Asia (d) and Energy Development Corp. declared a P[illegible] per share cash dividend and another P[illegible] per share special cash dividend in favor of stockholders of record as of March 30.

TEODORICO Jose Datto resigned as assistant corporate secretary and corporate information officer of East Asia Power Resources Corp. Nelia Lynie Cruz was designated acting corporate information officer until a permanent replacement is named.

EQ Corp. announced the resignation of the following directors: Antonio Oreo, Constantino Quimbo and Porfirio de Castro. Elected to replace them were Rolando de Ocampo, Wilfredo Sanchez and Ernesto de Castro. Manuelo Sy was elected director to replace Juan Santos who resigned after being appointed Trade and Industry Secretary. Dante Bayter was elected vice president and general manager of the construction division.

CDEG Holdings Inc. moved its annual stockholders' meeting to April 29, 11 a.m. at the City Sports Club Cebu.

CDEG Property Ventures & Development Corp. moved its annual stockholders' meeting to April 29, 2 p.m. at the City Sports Club Cebu. *Data gathered by Marlene D. Tolosa, PDS Research*

LIFESTYLE

Style with a social conscience

Using her signature banana-abaca fiber and Mangyan weaves in her creations, premiere designer Dita Sandico-Ong aims to promote the concept of an eco-luxury lifestyle

BANANA-WRAP Zen one-shoulder beaded dress with magenta hand-painted butterfly print

BANANA fiber and pina rein beaded corset and pina layered skirt with lace patches

By Shirley Oh
Contributor

IN CELEBRATION of her 20th year in the fashion industry, designer Dita Sandico-Ong, known for her advocacy of using indigenous materials and helping the environment, will hold "Umusa," a multimedia fashion event, on April 15 at Fairhaven, San Mateo, Rizal.

The fashion event will showcase designs that show the evolution of Filipino fashion from its indigenous beginnings to modern urban tribal Filipino and futuristic global getups.

Using her signature banana-abaca fiber and Mangyan weaves in her creations, Sandico-Ong aims to promote the concept of an eco-luxury lifestyle, where nature, the environment, arts, culture and fashion are fused together as one.

During the "Umusa" preview held last March 11 at a Forbes Park residence, the designer gave the guests a glimpse of a fashion collection re-volving around the themes of "Kabuoan," "Sigasig" and "Dakas."

Her trademark materials, banana fiber and pina silk, were transformed into exquisite wrap dresses, tunics, skirts and corsets in eye-catching shades of turquoise, yellow, red-orange and beige, with beading and hand-painted designs for extra additional flair.

While the forte of Sandico-Ong's creations spoke of Filipino culture, the dress and sleek cuts of the clothes lent them a stylishly contemporary air, resulting in fun-but-chic outfits—modern, military and undeniably classic.

The main focus of the evening, though, was the presentation of the designer's latest project and cause, as well as the beneficiary of her upcoming fitness fashion event: the Zero-Waste Fiber Board Housing Project, where abaca sector is made into low-cost housing material for the benefit of the Cantubbasan community.

With this project, the designer aims to provide weather-proof, fire-resistant and termite-proof houses that will serve as sturdy and stable homes to the people of Cantubbasan.

Because the Zero-Waste Fiber Board is 100 percent recyclable, the cost of living in houses that can withstand the rest of calamities won't be so high anymore. For only P20,000, a family can already be provided with sufficient material to construct their own home.

With the community working together to provide labor, the project also aims to bring forth "an eco-community that promotes a total eco-dependent mentality."

The Zero-Waste Fiber Board Housing Project, through Sandico-Ong's fashion show and other projects, hopes to encourage people to be more creative and resourceful in finding earth-friendly solutions to social problems.

BANANA-WRAP Zen dress with purple hand-painted banana fiber print

RAJO Laurel

DATE dress by Randy Ortiz

RAJO Laurel

RANDY Ortiz

RAJO Laurel

Skin bliss, after a fashion

DEBUTANTES Londres, Rajo Laurel and Randy Ortiz

Pond's serves up glamour for the fair-skin seekers and other women who simply want to have good, healthy skin

Text by Dave Padilla
Contributor
Photos by Jim Globe Pascuzzo

JUDGING by the success of skin-whitening products in the country, it seems what most Filipino women aspire to have these days is "flawless rosy white skin." It begs the question, is fair skin the measure of beauty?

Pond's recently launched its new Skin Whitening Luster On range at the Ayala Museum.

The event began with a solo performance of world-renowned flamenco dancer Clara Ramona of Centro Flamenco, followed by a brief yet artistic presentation showcasing Pond's personality and beauty-values—that empower women so they can be as beautiful as they want to be.

Perfect moments

For the main event, Randy Ortiz, Rajo Laurel and Dennis Lucero served up unique collections whose themes celebrated a woman's "perfect moments." Seen the first date in the prom, the debut and the wedding.

Ortiz's presentation of his "first date" collection was like a breath of fresh air. In pleated tops and simple yet elegantly cut dresses all done in chiffon, the models came out in soft corals and pink hues, all oozing femininity, innocent and sweet.

"The prom" was Laurel's domain. With this, it was like a trip to the set of "Grease While Love," with the ladies wearing clothes reminiscent of Bianca Zubiaga's very '50s album sends a modern twist—taffeta bubble skirts with asymmetrical tops generously embellished with paillettes and sequin beads.

Since I had just seen the Oscars, the memory of the jaw-dose fashion was all still very fresh in my mind, and that was what I thought upon seeing Lucero's "the Debut" ball gowns. The days of the bouffant gown, lace and puffed Cyrus bona-head sleeves are long dead and gone. Now it's all serpentine and gowns cut close to the body, very much red carpet glitz and glam.

As expected in the finale, the wedding couture from the three designers was fabulous. But I have to say that the night's applause went to the newly married supermodel, Marian Rivera, who looked divine in a classic, sophisticated wedding gown by Ortiz.

It was a night of beauty and style. And I thought a date, it would have always been a "perfect moment" for me, too. The evening was nice and cool, the atmosphere relaxed, and the guests looked like they enjoyed themselves. It was a good night to find sensitive women and sensitive to celebrate.

They say beauty is in the eye of the beholder. This may be true regardless of skin color, so I celebrate my brown skin, here's to celebrating beauty however we like it!

PRIOM dress by Rajo Laurel

DEBUTANTE gowns by Dennis Lucero

POND'S new Skin Whitening Luster On range

"All Glam" hairstyle, created by Charles Dujic, interpreted by Rocky Delgado of Beaumont Salon

Straight hair, begone!

Hollywood celebrity hairstylist Charles Dujic says rebonded locks are so five years ago

THE STYLIST to A-list Hollywood celebs like Cate Blanchett and George Clooney takes a bow at the recent Sunsilk hair trend show he headlined at the Hotel Inter-Continental Manila.

By Cheche V. Maral

YOU have to shake things up around here," says Charles Dujic.

The Hollywood celebrity hairstylist makes this comment after observing the slew of pin-straight-locked Filipinas on his recent Manila visit. Thermal- and chemical-straightened hairstyle is "so five years ago," he adds with a grimace. "If this hair trend comes back in 10 years, that's fine. But right now, it's crazy."

Dujic, whose A-list Hollywood clients include Cate Blanchett, George Clooney, Sarah Michelle Gellar and Naomi Watts, is more than just a few; he's a 15-year veteran in the hairstyling business. His impressive resumé includes editorials for Cosmopolitan, Vanity Fair, Esquire, Xposé Illustrated, Details, Glamour; countless ads and commercials, music videos, and the red-carpet looks of several Hollywood stars.

Often quoted in lifestyle magazine for its hair-care section, Dujic is the spokesperson of Sunsilk Strength and Shine Shampoo. His Manila jaunt was his first trip to Asia.

Basic foundation

The American stylist is well aware of how quickly hair trends jump from the pages of magazines or the red carpet onto the streets. But, often, people tend to overlook the basic foundation of a good hairstyle.

The key to achieving a great hair, according to him, is healthy, split-ends-free hair. And getting just that is not exactly rocket science.

Modern hairstyling techniques, while they help us get our coveted looks, aggravate already environment-ravaged hair. Dujic says it

(CONTINUED ON A12)

"BE Romantic," interpreted by Eric Monsigat of Studio 144

"BE Edgy," interpreted by Leonardo Vasquez of Jovi Morales

Straight hair, begone!

YOUNG actress Angelica Panganiban sports Ondjo's "BE Alive" look.

"BE Sophisticate," interpreted by Cherry Reyes of Francesco Toni & Guy

"BE Chic," interpreted by Crispin Britanico of Crispin Britanico Salon

"BE Daring," interpreted by Henri Calayag of H Salon

"BE Rockin'," interpreted by Jing Mesia of Propaganda Salon

"BE Fresh," created and interpreted by Ondjo for show-biz newcomer Eric Gonzales

WHEN cutting and layering hair, Ondjo employs the point-cutting technique. Using a razor, he says, will damage hair and result in split ends.

ONDJO'S "BE V Brave" look for TV personality Martel Rodrigues

Ondjo went on to practice preventive measures to strengthen hair from harsh styling.

It is the new framework's claim that regular use can prevent split ends by as much as 90 percent. It boasts of botanical and lime vita complex as added ingredients to nourish and condition hair to avoid breakage.

It is imperative to get the help of a pro to rid you of existing split ends, says Ondjo. That way, he adds, you are assured that no straight hair (sacred cow) is treated. When cutting hair, Ondjo himself uses the point-cutting technique as alternative to the razor to avoid split ends.

When, do you, Ondjo reminds that subjecting the hair with a razor is a no-no. He is amused to know that most Filipinas dry their hair with the hairdryer on. (There only one hairdryer for photo shoots!"), but he reminds that may be too harmful to the hair.

As alternative, he suggests using voluminous your hairstyles, which is typically more expressive but is not as harmful as regular hairstyles. It is also the hair more as that with half the heat.

Ondjo asserts that hot oil treatments are too old-fashioned, and suggests protein, panto or mineral oils. As for coconut oil for the hair, "It is wonder, why not?"

Hair show

Also part of Ondjo's mini-week visit was a hair trend show at the Hotel Inter-Continental Manila, which had him collaborating with veteran stage hairstylists.

He styled three young movie stars inspired by the "BE (Beautiful Hair)" theme. He says he always tries to create a style that looks "lived in, and not too-styled."

"Instead of pampering," he says, "hairstylists should spend time educating their clients and giving them tips on they know how to style their own hair." From his own experience with celebrities, he says, "If they find a connection with you, they ask you back."

Ondjo says an expensive haircut doesn't always mean a pretty haircut, and talks of Angelina Pitt's cute "chikadoo." Pitt, stylist in Modern, recently created a stir when he opened his New York salon that charges $600 for a haircut, possibly the most expensive all over the world.

More important than the cost of the haircut and a stylist's celebrity status, according to Ondjo, is finding a stylist that you can communicate with.

Instead of going for a "rebond," he advises women to "get a perm." Soft curls will flatter the frame of a round face. As women usually have round- and heart-shaped faces, asymmetric cuts are the way to go.

"Color is also a great way to get a new look," he continues.

Ondjo says Filipinas who have straight hair are losing double business when their hair-chart looks to achieve that already dated pin-straight style. He calls it a major hair faux pas.

Pleasure with wavy locks, he adds, should "embrace what they have" and pick hairstyles that enhance their best features while minimizing their flaws.

In other words, just "BE."

LIFESTYLE

THE LATEST offering from Louis Vuitton: the Speedy Lady Quartz and Automatic Chronograph

Louis Vuitton has launched Speedy watch, a travel watch like no other

THE GIRLS from Manila strike a pose with Albert Boonzaaier, watch department director of Louis Vuitton.

Another classic in the making?

APPLES' PICKINGS

Apples Aberion-Southerland

FASHION classics are always a worthy investment. They are timeless pieces that improve with age and can be passed on from one generation to the next. Not everyone will agree but those who enjoy, appreciate and savor fashion as an art form will understand.

Louis Vuitton, one of the world's leading luxury brands, has always been known for crafting classic pieces. Point in case, the Speedy bag (our personal favorite from the LV collection), which was created in 1930 and is still tremendously popular. To this day, it's flying off the shelves and selling like the proverbial hotcakes.

Needless to say, I am quite the fan of LV (admire the way they've maintained their exclusivity, quality and craftsmanship, while keeping abreast of the latest trends). So, when my editor asked me to fly to Hong Kong to cover the launch of LV's new watch line, I was thrilled.

As expected, Louis Vuitton handled the whole event with unabashed class and aura. I was billeted at the Grand Opun hotel together with other press delegates from the Philippines and all over Asia. From there, we were whisked off to several events, first of which was a viewing of the first ever Louis Vuitton store dedicated to watches and jewelry. Located in the east lobby of the impressive Peninsula Hong Kong, the luxurious boutique is—get ready in itself with its chic design concepts by famous architect Peter Marino. Of course, all this only serves as an introduction to what lies within: an even more impressive collection of precious jewels and watches, specifically the Tambour, LV's first watch line launched in 2002.

Travel-inspired

The main event was yet to come. After the meet and, we moved to the very and exclusive Dirk Gardens, with its old-world-ery floor-to-ceiling windows and crystal fixtures open to high ceiling, for the presentation of

(CONTINUED ON PAGE C-2)

THE IMPRESSIVE façade of the first ever Louis Vuitton Shop dedicated to watches and jewelry. More impressive are the baubles you'll find inside.

MY FAVORITE Speedy style, the Boulpi, which is perfect for the sunny, sophisticated traveler.

HUSBAND/APPOINTEE Cinematographer Raj Sadhwani and Sander Tavasca with Louis Vuitton's senior press and public relations manager Andrew Glenn and Philippine Star's Mano Remulo-Tarroza.

LOUIS Vuitton Philippines brand manager Rhea de Vera, Metro Magazine's Melanie Cuevas and Liberty's Asia's Celine Hermosa to check out the Speedy collection.

Another classic in the making?

the Speedy watch line. Albert Boonzaaijer, Louis Vuitton watch department director, was on hand to explain their latest baby.

The modern and sleek timepiece was inspired by travel, thus the use of colors of the city. It also features the Damier pattern in the back and in the grains in the face, reflecting its urban-inspired tapestry feel.

It comes in three styles. The necessary Chronograph, which is available with a brown or yellow alligator strap and a steel bracelet, the Lady Quartz watch, which is available with a light blue, orange or alligator strap as well as a steel bracelet and, my favorite, the Boulpi, a timepiece with two dials that functions in synchronization, thus, enabling the wearer to adjust to different time zones. What's special about it is that time zones can vary by 15 minutes, therefore, giving the traveler the most exact time. This movement was especially developed for Louis Vuitton.

But what's the point of having yet another watch line in an already saturated market? According to Boonzaaijer, they are not positioning themselves against other brands. Instead, they aim to uphold Louis Vuitton's value of exclusivity. "It's all about an attraction, an emotional link. Plus, the accessories we put into all our products. This watch is for someone who understands."

So, is this the making of yet another classic? Only time will tell (see pun intended!). But if prospective quality, fine attention to detail, creativity and know-how, this imagines is for you.

The Speedy watch collection will be available in Louis Vuitton stores in April.

E-mail the author at spaulino@hotmail.com

THE BACK of the Speedy watch case is engraved with the Damier pattern. Such features are a testament to Louis Vuitton's fine attention to detail.

DANCING THE PARTY. On Rachel, purple tulle dress with jersey lining, rose brooch and shirred back; on Elizabeth: Thai silk dress with beaded bodice and organza underskirt.

Graduating in style

LOOK good on graduation day without spending a fortune.

Rustan's, now celebrating its 55th year, offers a wide selection of pretty and affordable graduation dresses.

Rustan's 13 stores in Metro Manila and some provinces carry full-length gowns and cocktail dresses in chiffon, jersey, lace, velvet and other fabrics. They are available in lavender, pink, yellow and green.

Rustan's also offers the following tips in choosing a graduation dress:

• Choose a style that's comfortable. The graduation ceremony takes at least two hours. Make sure you will be able to walk, sit and kneel with ease in your graduation dress.

• Make sure you can walk in your shoes. Some schools insist that students wear their graduation shoes during rehearsals. Try to avoid stilettos or pointy toed shoes if you are tall.

• Get a cute bag that's big enough for your compact, powder, comb and lipstick for touch ups, a cute purse for emergency personals, handy and camera.

• Choose hairdo and makeup that are simple but will bring out your best features. Leave the bright red lipstick and flashy eye shadow for the post-graduation party.

Check out Rustan's gowns and cocktail dresses in branches at SM Store's Edsa Main Building, SM City Aurora, SM Fairview, SM Barretto, SM Megamall, SM Centerpoint, SM Marikina, SM Pampanga, Glorietta 1, Ilo Ilo's Festival Grand Mall, and Robinsons Galleria, Robinsons Place Manila and Robinsons Metro East.

GRAND STYLE. On Elizabeth: ruffled chiffon wrap dress with matching rose brooch and shawl; on Rachel: black-and-pink jersey dress with cabbage rose accent.

SERBETH Tinted, Paolo Pineda, ace photographer Raymond Isaac and precious Mina Bautista

THE BLACK In Ipoh: Denise Albert, marketing manager, Sari Sari Source; Mel Gonzales, brand manager, Solar-RPN; and Denise Sims, marketing manager, Solar-RPN

RENOWNED actress-singer Pinky Amador with free-agent businessman Jacques Ospaqui

LET'S HAVE more of this: Peter Chua Liong, CEO of Solar Entertainment, with vocal host Bianca Valerio

Hurrah for Hollywood!

WHEN glamour hit town, it came radiating down the red carpet in the arms of the fab Solar duo Emmanuel "Boss Vetchie" Pangilinan and his pal, Peter Chua Liong, to bring glitzy Hollywood to Manila, and they did so in a big bash at the chi-chi Mandarin Oriental's super cool Peter Lim ballroom. It was the pre-Oscar bash, pahogasi.

If you didn't know, Solar Entertainment was responsible for the hot star-studded event this year of the Oscar Awards on ESPN.

The partying push were brought to the bash in dual-themed luxurious layouts. They included local musical-comedy stages a bits of stars, such as lovely gorgeous Lorna Tolentino, Shelle Yongi and her husband Tim Wilson, who were all excited to hear from their honeymoon in Sorsogon; Hollywood celebrity chef Stan Blaza (who wore a clash of outfits); male stars Richard and Raymond Gutierrez; vivacious Pinky Amador, Bernard Palanca; lady Phoenix Santiago; rap model girl DJ Anap Rhaed and the beautiful and newly married Lovi Poe; Sirga Magsaysay's new edition, Gaita Sibal; and the Ish Chinggay Andrada with the love of her life, architect Mylor Encomienda. Color-interactive hops stuck of the faces. Talk about a full house.

Fashion stylist Angelo Millanes took home a pair of fancy sunglasses for his know-how of Oscar trivia. Renowned tattooist and Bat Tim were voted "the best looks," while Rep. Miles Swarez and Georgina Wilson were voted "best in black." Summer is in session, let's give black a siesta till the stars arrive in May 30's whites, pink and neon light colors.

Needless to say, host hops stuffed with good-to-wee gues to the night blew. The hugo-runs from the sponsors—Silver Swan, Nivea, Bustier's Essentials, Mega Magazine, Tgi Red Hood, Sha Shine, IDOL 1 and Fantomatic Tan in Day. Encounter were hosts host this-pre-Oscar's bash a winner! Cool, huh!

Rotary's movie night

The star-bedazzle prosperity of Rotarette "Tili" Lagoreal Jr. in pendy Forbes Park was glitz and glamour interwined with its setup of a 14-foot-wood movie screen. For the no-per fundraising event of the the Rotary Club of Ayala.

Ayala in hands-posed tuxedo, gavel bell and ceremonial regalia at the Rotary with its brilliant president, Alberto "Bong" Bassi, top officers and board of directors stood out that the fundraiser be a themed party for participants to give a gift and for a very very worthy cause, pahogasi.

Yes, dabbing, the Rotary did it beautifully by giving to the needy.

The Lagoreal manson became a glitzy Hollywood hove with authentic Hollywood memorabilia such as movie cameras and props, and lifesize standees of iconic like James Dean and Grace Dracula.

Before you could bat an eyelash, pahogasi, the Rotary ceremonial complex hovered in their chi-chi "formalities," all to their favorite Hollywood movie characters.

Rotary's fun couple, young business mag nate Boog Bassi and his wife, vivacious socialite Linda, looked fun chic as Indiana Jones and Sandy of "Grease." Or celebrity the beautiful Trish Sobrador Ocampo, looked like the sexpot out of the movie "Breakfast at Tiffany's." She even complete with orders.

The affair only shown that when those Rotarians (volunteer leaders in the Sunshine movers and shakers of the Makati City business community") party, it's always for a super cause. Since the entire budget for the starship was all paid for by golden-hearted president, Boog Bassi, the contributions to the Tsoh festival were to charity beyond belief.

Lunapalooza dinner

With love still in the air, pahogas, Lunapalooza 2 producer Albert Almendralejo, president of Apogee Productions, and multitalented Bamby Cuna, gave a thank you dinner at Cocolamba, where an intimate gathering of their pals dished out after producing the biggest Valentine's celebration to date. After all, Sadie C. dumped that eye-catching Lunapalooza Commemorative Blanket on Saturday.

Kim Mesina and his no elegant wife, Rita, led the list of VIP attendees like ABS-CBN Publishing EIC Thelma Lee Jones, Arnold Vegafalta, singer Gabrie Milbalo, plus other close pals.

The guests feasted on El Comedor's yummy paella, the cholesterol-packed lechon, an array of wines and Pangrolaos ice cream.

While dining, they showed homage of the Lunapalooza events throughout the country—in Cebu, Davao, Angeles and Manila.

For light entertainment, acoustic sensation Paolo Santos serenaded the gang to Billy Joel's pajama hours draped pillows were given out "as a token for everyone's hard work and contribution to the success," really the love-love album of the year for many pahogas.

HEY, JUST WON! Rep. Miles Rocamora a "Bless in Black" award.

STUNNINGOLT gorgeous model Clara Sevilla

BREATHTAKING Lorna Tolentino

HOTSHOT Wilson Tieng, Solar Entertainment chair

GRAX pub-or-ineery! Beauty and brains Nia Romero-Lim's good-looking Paolo Cubcubo

GAIN-SAYS raise an Oscar-fashion glam

CIVIC-MINDED leader Mario Rodriguez with daughter Lizelle Samson

MOVIE actor and director Cesar de Leon and alongside de compatible Carding Yan

POWER MOVERS. Tito Almendral, Boog Bassi, Bally Ocampo, Cesar de Leon and Mike Gaerlan (seated) and president Paolo Prieto and Ian Ocampo

BEAUTY queens/supermodels Patty Ibarra and Gem Padilla dash Lunapalooza producer Albert Almendralejo

TV CELEBRITY Trish Sobrador Ocampo as Audrey Hepburn in "Breakfast at Tiffany's"

HOTSHOTS OF THE EVENT. RCPM president and future president PP Bobby Chung with the host and hostess of the affair, popular, well-respected couple, RCPM president Boog Bassi as Indiana Jones and his wife Linda Lagoreal as Sandy of "Grease"). Charter president Tito Lagoreal with his son Ben Lagoreal, RCPM's incoming president

THE CENTENNIAL Rotary Ann. Angie de Cuerva, Ria Almendral, Grace Carbungco and Jet Enriquez (standing) Manila, New York and Paris writer Jet excellence, vice-standing Vicky de Leon, and the hostess Linda Lagoreal Bassi

BRILLIANT Jay Ramos of the Subic Bay chain of hotels

YOUNG woman of substance Ana Dingdin and Poly Jalosna

HEY, GOOD-LOOKING! Down-to-earth model Wilson Devaughn

THE AUTHOR using Lancôme's Diagnos machine

BLANC Expert range

Know your skin the high-tech way

Diagnos is used by Lancôme scientists to uncover the specific problem of your skin so you may deal with it accordingly

THERE are so many skincare products out there that one hardly knows what to pick for a particular skin type.

Most of us have a combination of problems that it's hard to stick to a specific regimen that treats just one. Lancôme has decided to lend us a helping hand in the form of Diagnos, a really high-tech machine which I tried out in Lancôme's Makati. You will not be charged for using the machine, so you needn't worry about that.

Diagnos is used by Lancôme scientists to uncover the specific problem of your skin so you may deal with it accordingly. What you find out may surprise you. First, you will be asked how old you are, then the machine which has a seven-point monitor will magnify your skin 60 times and look deep down.

Diagnos will measure oil production in the T zone and cheeks, firmness, hydration and pores size, and sensitive signs of aging and pigmentation as well. It will compare your results with the average age group of your race (Caucasian, Asian, African American, etc.) and you will get results indicating if you are above average or in wrinkle.

My results showed that my skin was definitely younger than average. It even looked better than those of average Asian women in their 20s, said the machine.

My problem? My oil production was three times more than the average 20-year-old, and there were huge pores and very dark pigmentation deep down.

Needless to say, the results shocked me. I never go under the sun, have been wearing sun block since I was 12, and have been praised numerous times for my flawless skin. Even the girl had a double chek, as the tox was surprised.

Turns out that while I had taken care of my skin really well and have been using the right product over time, pigmentation was just about ready to break out under the skin.

If you look at the surface of my skin, there is none visible. But on the screen, in close up day, there was a huge map of pigmentation with oily clay spaces in between just dying to burst to the surface. Obviously my vacations in Boracay where I put on my guard down to enjoy the sun left considerable damage that was set to surprise me when I got older.

My friends laughed out loud when the cosmetic whitening range Blanc Expert with Idebi Bio Co was recommended for me to correct this. Having such strong Chinese ancestry gave me very light skin, but the bloodlines of melanin which makes skin age slower also makes it prone to hyperpigmentation. A lot of fair-skinned Asians would probably have that same problem.

The good thing with using a whitening/brightening range is that you can break them down before using them. In my point, I would substitute the Blanc Expert essence for the Serumrine Total vitamin C serum which drains out and concludes point as well as repairs any environmental damage. My day moisturizer would be Lancôme's SPF 30+ sun block.

My eye area, though, shows no sign of aging, so I could choose whatever eye cream I wanted except those which cover very rich in texture like foundation. The choices were Primevôlist, for prevention of signs of early aging, and Blanc Expert, for dark circles and bin prevention.

I chose Blanc Expert as I now knew my tendency for pigmentation. My hydration and firmness questions were also way above average.

New body range

Have you passed by POL or Fine Art lately? There is this new French body line that has caught my eye.

The brand is Nuxe, which has a very similar logo and packaging to Origins, but the similarities end there.

The star product in the group is the Huile nuage Dry Oil Golden Shimmer for the hair and body. I apply it to the ends of my hair after every shower and it gives the hair subtle highlights and major shine.

On the body, the shimmer gives a very flattering glow when applied strategically. The Family Rubs, meanwhile, penetrates the dryer of areas like the legs, ankles, hands, heels and elbows. It has mosquito repellent properties and SPF 12, but is gentle enough to be used on the face and underlies.

My personal favorite and something I would definitely buy again is the exfoliating soap. It is coarse enough to be effective for my back, arms and legs without being scratchy. I have successfully eliminated the blackheads and pimples on my back and shoulders and prevented ingrown hairs caused by waxing on my legs. I use it for my back and shoulders daily but twice a week on my legs.

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MORE star products